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STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

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STUDIES
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

BY

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TO MY FATHER

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PREFACE

IN 1915 *I began a study of the* Dialogues concerning Natural Religion *in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of Hume's position with regard to religion. Scholars have taken entirely opposite views of the meaning of the* Dialogues. *The work itself has a certain ambiguity which seemed to me, at first, to be due only to its literary excellence as "dialogue," for it was the last of Hume's philosophical writings, the product of his mature genius. But it appeared from his letters that he himself had long been in some perplexity over the attitude that he should take toward religion, and that he was actually dramatising, in the* Dialogues, *the inner conflict of his own mind. The struggle had dated, apparently, from the very earliest period of his intellectual life, which suggested that his scepticism might have arisen out of his personal difficulties with the arguments for a belief in the Deity. I set out to study the way in which his reflections on that problem could have led him to the "discovery" concerning the nature of our reasoning in terms of cause and effect, for which he is now famous. It occurred to me, too, that his very genuine concern to find some valid reason for believing in a Deity pointed to a constructive or "dogmatic" tendency in his thought. I studied his first book, the* Treatise of Human Nature, *to see if it contained any positive theory of knowledge. It was natural to follow this study with an examination of the* Enquiry concerning Human Understanding *and the later writings, in which he matured his philosophic scepticism. What these successive studies finally revealed was a kind of "naturalism," the tendencies of which are now apparent to us in contemporary realism. But I have had to leave the reader with a problem which I do not know how to solve, because its solution calls for a mastery of the present situation in philosophy to which I cannot pretend. The problem is illustrated in*

Hume's attitude at the end of his career: he "confesses" to belief in some form of theism, and yet he justifies his conviction by a naturalistic view of human life and knowledge the cosmic aspect of which seems utterly incompatible with any religious belief.

In April 1917 *I presented to the Faculty of Princeton University a portion of these studies as a dissertation in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The dissertation was entitled* An Introductory Study of Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, *and comprised Chapters XI, XII, and XIII of this book, together with the sections from Chapter II dealing with Cicero, Bayle, Francis Bacon, Berkeley, and Malebranche* (*pp.* 31-57) *which followed immediately after the discussion of* Part One *of the* Dialogues (*p.* 315).

My indebtedness is not so much to books about Hume as to conversations with teachers and friends. It is not possible for me to estimate, at this time, my debt to Professor Norman Kemp Smith who proposed the original study and showed me the meaning and importance of Hume. Because of his return to England in the early years of the war, and his subsequent connection with Edinburgh University, I did not have the benefit of his immediate guidance, even for the completion of my dissertation. His visit to this country in 1923, *however, enabled me to obtain some very salutary criticism of the whole book, which resulted in the arrangement of the studies in the present order rather than in that of their composition.*

I have received very great help, too, from my friend, Professor Warner Fite, who assumed the further direction of my work upon the dissertation and who encouraged me constantly to proceed to the other studies, and to publish them. It was his fine, discriminating criticism of the completed work that led me, at the last moment, to omit several of the studies,—dealing with the Passions, *the* Morals, *and the* Natural History of Religion,—*and to write, instead, a new chapter (Chapter IX) on the varying success of Hume's constructive theory of the imagination.*

PREFACE

Several books have been far more of a stimulus to me than the scanty references to them in the text would indicate. Anton Thomsen's David Hume: Sein Leben und Seine Philosophie (*Volume One, published* 1912) *is a worthy commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of Hume's birth. Its theme is that the most significant portion of Hume's thought is contained in his* Natural History of Religion. *I could not have done justice to this valuable work without engaging in a discussion of a polemical character, which was foreign to my intention. And in like manner I have said little about the writings of John Dewey, S. Alexander, C. D. Broad, and A. N. Whitehead, although they have been constantly before me as I made my studies.*

I am grateful for the generous measure of encouragement given by my friend Professor A. A. Bowman, of Princeton University, and by Professor Mary Whiton Calkins, of Wellesley College. And for many detailed criticisms of my thought and expression, as well as for the labor of proof-reading, I owe a great debt of thanks to my friends, Mr. H. K. Dick, of Columbia University, Dr. Theodore M. Greene, my colleague, Professor Robert Shafer, of the University of Cincinnati, and to my wife.

Princeton University
October 19, 1924

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STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

CHAPTER ONE

The Ambitions and Concerns of a Life-Time

When Socrates had finished speaking, he enjoined upon Crito the sacrifice of a cock to Asclepius. He had been revealing to the friends gathered about him for the last time his beliefs in the soul of man and its immortality—for they were come to grieve with him over losing that good thing they called life, life in Athens, under Greek gods. They were not very strong in his faith and seemed doubtful and disquieted. Socrates steadied them with reminiscences of his own intellectual life—he had been a persistent inquirer, restless in mind, insatiable for knowledge, but he believed in certain moral and religious ideas. He had just succeeded in winning their assent to the probability of these high realities. But they were to live on in the society that had repudiated him. As their thought flew to the moment when their master would be no more they saw themselves alone in the city. Thus they seemed bewildered as to their allegiance, whether or not it would mean a severance with the Greek tradition. As if to reassure them, then, Socrates paid obeisance to one of the popular gods, and he bade Crito, ever sensitive to public opinion, to perform the ritual office for him. We have no reason to doubt that Crito faithfully executed this injunction. But a younger man was won over to philosophy by the death of Socrates, who divined the import of that dying request and vindicated Socrates before the next generation, and for all time to come, as the good citizen and the good man. Plato propitiated Greek sentiment by fervid, dramatic dialogues. Otherwise history might even now record that contemporary judgment which was press-

ing so hard on those grief-stricken disciples: that there was one Socrates in fifth century Athens who was a law-breaker, an atheist, and a corrupter of youth.

To many of his contemporaries David Hume appeared as a destroyer of morality and religion. He had trodden the straight way of philosophy, having cherished the idea, even in early manhood, of being the Socrates in the period of modern thought which Francis Bacon had heralded. Like that great figure of ancient times he turned from the sciences of physical nature to study our own human nature. He was caught in the general problem of what "cause" means in our thinking. His inquiry was thus truly Socratic. When his first book met no response from the public he wrote it over again, definitely avowing his philosophy to be an "Academic scepticism," hoping that this allegiance to the time-honored school of Plato would enlighten others so that they might see his meaning. But the persistent questionings of the man aroused only a fulsome prejudice against him. Somehow he had touched the pieties of his generation to the quick. It was not what he had said but his reticences that counted against him. They gave rise to suspicions, particularly with regard to his attitude toward divine realities. He had been silent because he was still thinking about these things. At last, unwilling to live suspect any longer, he set about recording his thoughts on religion. He had convictions and he had his doubts. His writing of them took the form of personal conversation. He showed these *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* to his intimate friends who admired their literary excellence but stood appalled at the relentless questions of the sceptic in the argument: he was counselled earnestly not to divulge such a work, and even to destroy it. But he obstinately held fast to his manuscripts and studied the matter for a number of years and added to what he first wrote. Finally, when he was about to die, he made special provisions in his will that two of his trusted friends should publish what had been maturing so long as the complete

expression of his thought. The *Dialogues* seem thus to be his own propitiatory offering to his age. And with them was a brief memoir, *My Own Life*, a dignified and self-respecting story of his purposes and career. Not favored with a Plato, or even a Crito, David Hume was revealing his mind and heart through documents much more personal than those by which his contemporaries had judged him.

Now it happened that Hume provided all too carefully, in his anxiety to have the coming generation recognise him in a truer light. He knew Adam Smith, his friend and pupil, was loath to publish the *Dialogues*. It seemed wise to add that William Strahan, his publisher and a stout man of affairs, should be associated with that scholar in the undertaking. And, feeling uncertain still, he made a final provision that if those friends should have done nothing after two and a half years from the time of his decease, his own nephew David Hume was to have the work printed and given out to the world. His friends published a complete, corrected edition of the philosophical writings immediately upon his death. They included only *My Own Life*, and a loyal tribute to his life and character by Smith himself. Meantime the younger David Hume had to wait, chafing at the delay. He brought out the *Dialogues* in 1779. They thus appeared belatedly—cut off from the autobiography, and from the whole body of Hume's writings. Ever since that time they have had to stand by themselves, almost as if their author himself had wanted to disown them. Yet there was nothing by which he clearly set such store as that piece of literature.[1] All this suggests that we have not yet fully discovered to ourselves the meaning which these *Dialogues* were to reveal.

Of course we think highly of Hume today. Time has made us indifferent to some of the things about which men

[1] The provisions of the will and various letters passing between Hume and his friends and relatives may be read in Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, Edinburgh, 1846, Vol. II, pp. 490-5, and G. B. Hill, *Letters of David Hume to William Strahan*, Oxford, 1888, pp. 337-8, 347-9, 351-64.

of the eighteenth century felt so strongly—the odium has gone. We are not fearful lest our morals and religion be corrupted by his questionings. What is more important, we see the point of his special question about the value of the maxim of cause and effect in our knowledge. Kant has taught us this appreciation. And history now records, ungrudgingly, the keen insight of this thinker who met with so much prejudice in his own times.

Our conception of Hume is, nevertheless, still an eighteenth century one. It is almost entirely founded upon Kant's discovery of his challenging scepticism.[2] Kant discerned the issue and then plunged into nine years of hard work to answer Hume. What he saw in the man was purely critical genius. To us he has come to represent, therefore, the admirable spirit of free, honest inquiry. He has fears and hopes like the rest of humanity. But his chief fear is that of self-delusion. And his hope gives him persistence in the asking of what we really mean by most of those convictions we live by and call the truth. He studies, analyses, reasons out to the end. He seems always cool, unperturbed, and detached. He seems finely typical of the eighteenth century mind.

Hume knew himself best as the critic. Did he not say of himself, in closing the first book of his youthful *Treatise of Human Nature*, that he aimed to make an accurate anatomy of the nature of man? When Francis Hutcheson gave him a friendly criticism with regard to the manuscript of the book on *Morals*, that it lacked warmth in the cause of virtue, Hume replied that he wanted primarily to be the anatomist rather than the painter, although he would try "to make the moralist and the metaphysician agree a little better." But he felt many doubts about himself. He confessed them, to this same friend: "I am apt in a cool hour to suspect, in general, that most of my reasonings will be more useful by furnishing hints and ex-

[2] See K. Hedvall, *Humes Erkenntnistheorie kritisch dargestellt*, Uppsala, 1906, pp. 59-60.

citing people's curiosity, than as containing any principles that will augment the stock of knowledge, that must pass to future ages."[3] Even later, at the height of his powers, he was conscious of the predominantly critical aspect of his philosophy. He wrote to Sir Gilbert Elliot, in a letter that accompanied the newly-written *Dialogues*: "If in order to answer the doubts started, new principles of philosophy must be laid, are not these doubts themselves very useful? Are they not preferable to blind, and ignorant assent? I hope I can answer my own doubts; but if I could not, is it to be wondered at? To give myself airs, and speak magnificently, might I not observe that Columbus did not conquer empires and plant colonies?"[4] He would be, at the least, a discoverer. And this is really the fame that we today are inclined to award him. His figure of speech was a true prophecy.

Still, Hume was not content with this character. It was not all that he wanted to be. He was ambitious, aspiring to "augment the stock of knowledge, that must pass to future ages." He devoted himself hopefully to the task of answering the doubts he had raised. A pupil of Francis Bacon, he, too, had the mission to advance learning in new fields of research. It is the very nature of ambition to make men construct something. He wanted to found an empire of thought, and colonies, that is to say, a body of knowledge that would develop fruitfully in the minds of other men.

It is this ambition that *My Own Life* discloses. He acknowledged in it a "ruling passion," the "love of literary fame."[5] His family had intended him to enter the law, since he needed to have some profession for a livelihood, but he could not keep away from "the pursuits of philosophy and general learning." So ardent was he in his youth-

[3] Burton, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 112-3, 118; and *Essays*, ed. Green & Grose, Longmans Green, 1912, Vol. I, pp. 28-31.
[4] Burton, *ibid.*, p. 334.
[5] Letters, to Michael Ramsay, July 4, 1727, and to a physician, about 1733, in Burton, Vol. I, pp. 14 *ff.*, 31 *ff.*

ful studies that he suffered in health. And not being able to afford a leisurely existence he had to try a more active, business life, in Bristol. He found the atmosphere unsuited to his interests. He then crossed over to France and secluded himself in the country, to study and write. There, at the age of twenty-three, he committed himself wholly to the career marked out for him, living by strict frugality upon his small means while he worked at letters and philosophy.

Three years passed. He composed his *Treatise of Human Nature* by the time he was twenty-five. Then he went to London to publish it. "It fell *dead-born from the press*" (1739), a severe blow to him. But he was staying with his mother at the country house of his elder brother and in that environment soon recovered his naturally cheerful disposition. It seemed to him that his thought failed only because of its unattractive literary form, so that he set about writing some pieces in the popular style, *Essays on Moral and Political Subjects* (1741-2). Happily these won favor with the reading public. He continued, however, at his more rigorous studies, improving his knowledge, especially in Greek. Then came an opportunity to increase his fortune somewhat, by serving as tutor and later as secretary to certain people in high estate. Two years passed in this occupation, the only interruption he suffered in his pursuit of learning during the whole course of his life. He now possessed enough to make him financially independent, though the funds were so meagre that his friends smiled at his "fortune."

He turned again to the enterprise nearest his heart, his philosophy. He rewrote the first book of his *Treatise* entirely and presented the challenge of his scepticism together with his suggestions toward a reconstruction of knowledge. But this *Essay on the Human Understanding*[6] (1748) "was at first little more successful than the *Treatise*." A new

[6] This title, imitative of Locke's, was changed in later editions to *An Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding.*

edition of his literary essays "met not with a much better reception." These disappointments made little or no impression upon his spirit. He retired again to his brother's estate, this time alone with him, for their mother had died. There he composed the *Political Discourses* (which comprise the second part of his *Essays*) and wrote the third book of his *Treatise* afresh, the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*.

While thus persisting at his vocation in the field of philosophy he was gladdened by some news that his writings were at last being discussed by people. They were coming to the fore, "all but the unfortunate *Treatise*." So he moved, in 1751, from the country to the town, "the true scene for a man of letters." He expected now to come to his own, to realise his literary fame. His *Political Discourses* came out (1752), "the only work of mine that was successful on the first publication." But the *Enquiry concerning Morals*, which he himself considered of all his writings "historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best," this favorite work "came unnoticed and unobserved into the world." Apparently no revision of that ill-fated *Treatise* was ever to succeed. Thus, when it happened that he was offered the post of librarian to the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh where he would have at his disposal materials for research, he accepted it and proceeded to avail himself of the opportunity for a new enterprise in the realm of learning. The publication of his first volume of the *History of England* only raised a storm of violent disapproval from every side. Yet two outstanding figures in public life wrote him their appreciation and bade him persevere in his impartial studies of the conduct of social and political affairs. These two were, oddly enough, the primates of England and Ireland. Despite their unexpected tribute to him he could not help feeling discouraged. His books on philosophy had failed to advance the cause of truth; his *History* likewise—everything encountered blinding prejudice. He was in genuine despair.

So deeply did he feel this that had it not been for the war between England and France at the time he would have actually changed his name, and hidden himself away in some rural community in France as he had done twenty years before while toiling at the first of his unfortunate books. Deprived of this extreme recourse he kept at work upon the *History*. The second volume was received fairly well, the third revived the clamor against him, and the two final volumes (1761) had a "tolerable, and but tolerable success."

Meantime he had not ignored philosophy. As historian he made a comparative study of religious thought and sentiment, *The Natural History of Religion* (1757). Of this he could only say: "Its public entry was rather obscure." By the year 1761, when he was fifty, he had exhausted himself in the "passion for literature." He desired now to live in quiet reflection, never to stir out of his native land. But there was offered him an honorable diplomatic post, in the Embassy at Paris, which he accepted. For he liked "the great number of sensible, knowing, and polite company with which that city abounds above all places in the universe." The French valued his political and economic writings and his *History*. They lionized him in the salons. This was all a pleasure to him. But he was at heart a philosopher, and so after three years he was back again in Edinburgh, intending to bury himself "in a philosophical retreat." He could not avoid, however, the post of Under-Secretary to Ireland for two years. Finally he secured freedom, in 1769, from all affairs of state or society, hoping to enjoy leisure and to see the increase of his fame. He was not allowed much time for these deserts. A mortal infirmity soon discovered itself. When he knew that his life was far spent he serenely narrated the dignified story of himself, *My Own Life*, which we have here reviewed.

He was devoted to the truth. It was for him really a great passion, a sentiment gathering in force and richness over the whole course of his life. When it failed of

realisation in his philosophical studies, after many labored writings, it led him to attempt historical work. This failing, he had an experience of such disheartenment that he would fain have begun his whole career anew. Wherein lay this failure told so calmly in the *Life*? It was the lack of "literary fame." But why "fame"? Because his work as a thinker would be fruitless without the recognition of others, without their knowing the meaning of his philosophy, without their response to it. No man advances learning if his insights do not enlighten other persons. The progress of learning as Bacon had described it requires the collaboration of many minds and the construction of a common body of knowledge. And the philosopher above all needs to assure himself of his soundness of mind by the evidence that others have learned something from him. "The arguments have been laid before the world, and by some philosophical minds have been attended to. I am willing to be instructed by the public; though human life is so short, that I despair of ever seeing the decision."[7] This he said at the end—it expresses what he had longed for throughout his maturity. To be instructed is to be helped toward the truth. And this is the full intent of his great thwarted ambition.

Hume's scepticism was, in a very real sense, a personal scepticism. He was left in doubt concerning the "decision." Had he made a real point in his writings on philosophy, and provided a new medium of truth? Though believing in himself, as his persistence in rewriting the *Treatise* clearly shows, he wanted to know that these were the right problems to discuss. Speaking of the human love of fame, in that *Enquiry concerning Morals* which had so greatly pleased him, he said: "By our continual and earnest pursuit of a character, a name, a reputation in the world, we bring our own deportment and conduct frequently in review, and consider how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant

[7] See letter in Burton, Vol. I, p. 98.

habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for themselves as well as others; which is the surest guardian of every virtue. . . . And our regard to a character with others seems to arise only from a care of preserving a character with ourselves."[8] When he saw no effectual discussion arising out of his philosophy he caught no image of himself in the true character of the philosopher. Thus he suffered the intimate tribulations of one who faces doubts concerning the value of his whole life.

Thence came that profound discontent with himself which shows itself particularly in personal letters to friends and which the philosophical tranquillity of his last days masks somewhat in the autobiography. When he had given up writing in order to go to Paris, in 1761, he was at the end of his resources. It was a genuine satisfaction to him that France recognised his talents for literature. But that furore of appreciation which his arrival evoked only served to make his sense of the failure of his distinctive work in his own environment the more poignant: "The taste for literature is neither decayed nor depraved here, as with the barbarians who inhabit the banks of the Thames. . . . I do not believe there is one Englishman in fifty, who, if he heard I had broken my neck tonight, would be sorry. Some because I am not a Whig; some because I am not a Christian; and all because I am a Scotsman. . . . The rage and prejudice of parties frighten me; and above all, this rage against the Scots which is so dishonorable and indeed so infamous to the English nation."[9] Bitterness, grief, fear, reproach are all in these words. While Paris was rendering unto him the things it thought his due, he was mindful of the standing he had with his

[8] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 251.

[9] Burton, Vol. II, pp. 196, 238, 265 (letters dating 1764-5); also pp. 190, 268, 281. Hume's popularity in France was based, in great part, upon his *History* and his *Essays*. His philosophy was not the subject of conversation.

contemporaries at home. He was not happy even in his glory.

That discontent has been very severely judged by some who are familiar with the world of letters in the eighteenth century.[10] Why should David Hume be always complaining about lack of recognition when he retired, as he himself confessed, "very opulent"? Writers do not become rich unless they have sold works and earned a reputation upon which they can trade to advantage in every succeeding publication. Many were struggling in poverty to gain a bare livelihood while he obtained a competence and independence. This continual dissatisfaction bespeaks a greedy desire for money and popularity that ill suits the profession of philosopher. The passion for fame was in him an inordinate one. It bears witness to a defect in the man. And it surely had something to do with the sterility of his work in philosophy. Such is the plausible criticism.

It seems inevitable that the quality of Hume's ambition should be misrepresented by those to whom the emphatic dogmatism of a Dr. Johnson is the breath of life. They would appear to believe, with their leading light, that no one but a fool ever writes for anything except money. David Hume had to provide for himself financially, which he accomplished by letting his services to hire in the honorable ways open to gentlemen in those times. By modest living he succeeded in maintaining himself without dependence upon any one else. He understood, too, how to make a good arrangement with his publishers. Through such abilities in the management of his affairs he obtained more than a sufficiency of means. All this he readily tells us himself. But he also professes the object of this frugal, well-directed career to be the winning of a place as philosopher among his fellow-men. His story is one of failure to realise that goal. The discontent he felt in

[10] G. B. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 164: "His constant discontent is contemptible, etc." Cf. pp. 104-5, 113, 143; Burton, Vol. I, pp. 413-4; R. Richter, *Skeptizismus in der Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1908, Vol. II, p. 244, and T. H. Green, *Introduction*, Vol. I, p. 213.

those years before he attained the serenity of his autobiography and which we have seen in the letters written from Paris—that discontent is really the stuff of which great work is made. It was not, indeed, always controlled. Hume felt disposed, at times, to blame others for their treatment of his ideas. He even assumed a national antipathy of the English to everything Scotch. But he was at bottom truly self-critical. And a letter, which he wrote at an advanced age, says: "Where a man of sense mistakes my meaning, I own I am angry; but it is only with myself, for having expressed my meaning so ill, as to have given occasion to the mistake."[11] He was referring here to the persistent misunderstanding of his arguments concerning cause and effect in the *Treatise*. He was not content with himself, as a philosopher, because of that lasting misconception of his thought. This is the mark of a high spiritual quality in the man.

The test of an ambition is its human workings. Had David Hume been infatuated with wealth and popularity, we should expect a very selfish course of life once he attained some measure of reputation. Burton describes for us what actually came to pass in the character of the man: "It may seem at first sight at variance with some of his other characteristics; but it is undoubtedly true, that Hume was imbued with an intense spirit of nationality. It was a nationality, however, of a peculiar and restricted character. He cared little about the heroism of his country, or even its struggles for independence. . . . But in that arena which he thought the greatest, in the theatre where intellect exhibits her might, he panted to see his country first and greatest. No Scotsman could write a book of respectable talent without calling forth his loud and warm eulogiums. Wilkie was to be the Homer, Blacklock the Pindar, and Home the Shakespere, or something still greater, of his country. On those who were even his rivals

[11] Burton is unable to ascertain to whom this significant letter was addressed, although he can ascribe its composition to an "advanced period of [Hume's] life," Vol. I, p. 98.

in his own peculiar walks—Adam Smith, Robertson, Ferguson, and Henry—he heaped the same honest, hearty commendation. He urged them to write; he raised the spirit of literary ambition in their breasts; he found publishers for their works; and, when they were completed, he trumpeted the praises of the authors through society."[12] This is scarcely patriotism—it is broad humanity. The animus of it we see in the story of *My Own Life*: Hume gave those in his neighborhood that prompt appreciation which he had missed in his own struggle for recognition. As he said, describing the love of fame, it inculcates in noble natures a reverence for other persons. It gave him the impulses to friendship with other men of letters. The fruits of his ambition were sentiments and activities entirely disinterested in character. The love of abstract truth engendered a love of those who were likewise seeking truth.

The story of Hume's life and work is not yet complete. There remains that other posthumous writing which will reveal something about the man. The *Dialogues* were a companion-piece to *My Own Life*. They were destined to appear contemporaneously with it. They offered something additional to the public. No mention of them was made in the autobiography. This was not because he did not care about them, for we have seen the extraordinary measures he took to secure their publication upon his death. That reticence itself is significant. We seem to be favored here with something more intimately personal than the other revelation of the man.

In the autobiography we learn about his philosophic ambitions—here we see his religion. The author himself talks even through the "sceptic": "Notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed

[12] Burton, Vol. II, pp. 31-2. For details of Hume's relations with the various authors here mentioned see Vol. I, pp. 385-93, 419, and Vol. II, pp. 17, 28, 42.

on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature."[13] We have seen him showing reverence for persons. Where reverence dwells in human nature, there religion has its roots. It may seem as surprising as the "nationalism" his biographer mentioned, but it is a fact that he professed a faith in these realities.

Hume had a life-long interest in religion. When he first wrote Sir Gilbert Elliot about the *Dialogues* (1751), he had already set down his thoughts on the subject and was forwarding his manuscript for criticism and help from that esteemed and intimate friend. "'Tis not long ago that I burned an old manuscript book, wrote before I was twenty, which contained, page after page, the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head. It began with an anxious search after arguments, to confirm the common opinion; doubts stole in, dissipated, returned; were again dissipated, returned again; and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason."[14] At that time he had not begun the *Treatise*. But his conversion to philosophy certainly happened in his eighteenth year.[15] It seems, then, that this studious career opened with searchings into the religious beliefs of the time. Hume could not confirm himself in the faith of the Christian. His mind was too restless, imagining all sorts of possibilities. But still he saw reason in the beliefs. Tossed between his doubts and his inclinations to assent he could then do nothing but register these conflicting attitudes in his notebooks. Meanwhile he made discoveries so important that he put them into writing. He had found a subject of fruitful exploration,—Human Nature. The new things he had to offer were published in the *Treatise*. When he came to write the *Enquiry* eight years later, he

[13] *Works, Treatise,* etc., Vol. II (*Dialogues*), p. 455.
[14] Burton, Vol. I, p. 332.
[15] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 31, 98, 337, and *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 19, 36-7.

had succeeded in stating some of the questions about religion and he added to the materials two essays, one on *Miracles*, and another *Of a Particular Providence and a Future State*. But he was not satisfied with the latter discussion. While in the country working over the *Enquiry concerning Morals* and the *Political Discourses*, writings done in his finest style, he seems to have begun the *Dialogues*. A copy of them was ready for Sir Gilbert Elliot in 1751. It was then, too, that Hume felt most encouraged to proceed with his work in philosophy, for his writings were gaining favor, so that he moved to Edinburgh in order to be really in the world of letters. He intended at that time to publish the *Dialogues*. He bade Elliot to ignore the *Treatise* henceforth and study his meaning only in these later writings.[16]

Then came the utter failure of the second *Enquiry* followed by that of the *History of England*, events which probably disposed him to accept the advice of his friend not to publish the *Dialogues*. Yet it was in this very period of severe trial and despair of attaining his ends that Hume kept silently at work upon the *Dialogues*. He had already written the *Natural History of Religion*. By 1761 he had completed all his historical and philosophical works, and again he contemplated publishing the perfected *Dialogues*, but was again dissuaded.[17]

[16] Burton, Vol. I, pp. 336-7.

[17] See letter to A. Smith, Aug. 15, 1776, Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 364: "On revising them (which I have not done these fifteen years)." And letter to Elliot, March 12, 1763, Burton, Vol. II, pp. 146-7. The *Dialogues* were thus Hume's last philosophical work, notwithstanding the opinions of Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Putnam, N.Y., 3rd ed., 1902, chap. VI, sec. 31, and A. Thomsen, *David Hume, Sein Leben und Seine Philosophie*, Berlin, 1912, pp. 79 *f.*, 142, who regard the *Natural History of Religion* as the final piece of writing. Yet Hume himself wrote, concerning this dissertation, on June 12, 1755, that he had then had it by him for "some years"—Burton, Vol. I, p. 421. The fact of his allusion to our tendency to personify the moon, in the *Natural History* (*Essays*, Vol. II, p. 317), seems to indicate that he composed the work the very year he was engaged with the *Dialogues*, since the same phrases occur in his letter to Elliot, March 10, 1751—Burton, Vol. I, p. 333. He finished the historical treatment first and spent years upon the philosophical discussion of religion.

Then there was a lapse of nine years when he was engaged in public affairs and biding the time for his fame. In 1772, however, the poet, James Beattie, sprang into the public eye with a brilliant *Essay on Truth* whose aim it was to down Hume the sceptic, which it accomplished in considerable measure by clever travesty of the expression of his ideas in the *Treatise*. Beattie was really famous. His book went into several editions forthwith—it gained a German translation the very year of its publication and fell into the hands of Immanuel Kant who learned, by this happy accident, the true point of Hume's questions and who counteracted in time the almost fatal set-back to his philosophic fame.[18] Beattie was something of a zealot in religion. He possessed enough genius, however, to discern the singular pertinence of that questioning of the causal maxim to the usual arguments for the reality of a Providence and a Future Life. He sought to destroy that scepticism at its source. His efforts were applauded by those who liked "common sense" in philosophy. Hume had been living in the hope of surviving long enough to observe something more than mere symptoms of his dawning literary fame—and now he found new prejudice aroused against him. His life was already too far spent for him to present his arguments in a new light. He had made it a practice never to reply publicly to his critics. It would have been futile to discuss Beattie's misconceptions of the truth. As he said in a letter: "The arguments have been laid before the world, and by some philosophical minds have been attended to." His doctrines in the *Treatise* might have success if they were "better illustrated and expressed." It would all depend on chance and would rest with posterity anyhow.[19] His "answer to that silly, bigotted fellow Beattie," then, consisted only in a Preface to a final edition of his philosophical writings, wherein he pointed out that the

[18] Cf. Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Macmillan, London, 1918, pp. xxviii-xxix.
[19] Burton, Vol. I, p. 98.

Treatise was a "juvenile work" not then acknowledged by himself, and desired readers to regard only the pieces in this definitive edition as the adequate expression of his views.[20] But he did not make public the fact that he had a new book to give to the world even better than the *Essays*. It was known only the last year of his life, by close friends and relatives, that he had provided for the publication of the *Dialogues*. They were to be a complete response to the attacks of those who boasted of their sound common sense. Hume "revised" them at this time. He approved of them as a careful and artistic expression of his thought. All the hopes and fears of a life-time gathered about this one piece of writing. He was anxious over its fate until the end. And his passing away reminded one of the attendant physicians of that Socrates who died beseeching his friend Crito to sacrifice dutifully for him to the god Asclepius.[21]

The discussions recorded in the *Dialogues* reveal the background of Hume's intellectual life. Out of such internal debates with himself came discoveries in philosophy whose publication took place much too early to be effectual in the minds of men, for the setting of these discoveries was not given them, so that they missed the point of his scepticism. But they suspected that it had something to do with the religious beliefs. Their prejudices increased further their misunderstanding of his thought. Thus the *Enquiries* too failed to disclose anything to the public. But all the while Hume was thinking about the subject of religion and writing down his thought. The greater part of his work

[20] *Works, Essays*, Vol. I, *Advertisement*. This notice has been construed to mean that Hume really disavowed the philosophy of the *Treatise* and that he specified the *Enquiries* as the exclusively representative expressions of his thought. We should not overlook, however, that he was quietly planning to have the *Dialogues* issued contemporaneously with that final edition. Hume advised Elliot in 1751 not to study the *Treatise*, but the *Enquiry* and later writings—and in that very letter he referred to the *Dialogues* manuscript as containing something really new. When they came out in 1779, Beattie perceived that Hume was incorrigible in his principles. See Burton, Vol. I, pp. 336-7, and Hill, pp. 302-3.

[21] Cf. Burton, Vol. II, pp. 516-7, letter of Dr. Cullen, Sept. 17, 1776.

upon it was done in the period between 1751 and 1761, the time of his maturity and wisdom.[22] It was a time of profound personal distress, full of the sense of defeat and shattered hope. Hence the *Dialogues* took on a deeply personal character. They became autobiographical. And when Beattie and other critics arose to strike him down in his infirmity, Hume decided to bequeath the *Dialogues* along with *My Own Life* to that posterity which would judge him as man and philosopher.

We are to pass judgment now upon Hume's philosophy, keeping in mind his abiding religious interest as well as his ambition to contribute some positive truth to the body of permanent human knowledge. It is the custom to think of him as being coolly indifferent to religion, if not actively denying its meaning. The discovery of his critical genius by Kant, a discovery made quite by accident and not by any guidance of personal sympathy or full knowledge,[23] has established a tradition. We read Hume almost exclusively as the "sceptic." We conceive his work through its contrast with that later idealism which it called into being. Sometimes we recognise a faint trace of constructive thought in it, mindful then of the English Utilitarianism with which it is historically continuous. In any event it is our wont to see in his philosophy only what influenced the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All this implies that Hume, though significant in history, cannot give us now any new inspiration. In short he is no longer a living figure. It is the fear of this that makes men who desire an immortality of the spirit

[22] It is an exaggeration to say, as Burton did (Vol. I, p. 328) that Hume was working at them for twenty-seven years (i.e., 1750-1776). He revised them in 1776 after a lapse of fifteen years, cf. above, p. 15 n. On the other hand we can say that the *Dialogues* contain Hume's *thinking* from the year 1731 until 1761. The revision that last year could not have been very extensive, for Hume was, at the time, quite ill.

[23] Cf. Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, pp. xxviii-xxix, 595, 600, for the story of Kant's happening upon the important passage on *Why a Cause is Always Necessary*, from the *Treatise*, which Beattie quoted in his *Essay on Truth*.

write autobiography. For when the work of their mind ceases, for a time, to live, their life-story of devotion to truth and the other profound concerns of all men can scarcely fail to renew our interest and make us see new meaning in their work.[24]

[24] It is worthy of notice that the most outstanding study of Hume, that by T. H. Green, expressly ignores all matters of personal interest, the purposes, the career of Hume, etc. (*Introduction*, Vol. I, secs. 3-4, Green & Grose, ed.) Green was bent upon representing that philosophy in the abstract, as typical of a certain mode of thought against which he himself, imbued with Kant and Hegel, defined the position of idealism. It is almost inevitable that a philosophy used as a foil for the critic's own views should lose its own individual significance. We cannot afford ever to lose sight of the biography of a "man of letters."

CHAPTER TWO

The Youth's Discovery

BEFORE Hume had composed the *Treatise of Human Nature* he was living in the fear of never being able to present his views fully and perfectly to the world. He was then twenty-three years old. And he had been suffering from a physical indisposition for four years. He knew that his intellectual ambitions would not be realised without better health. So he addressed himself, anonymously, to a famous Scotch physician. This letter is really a fragment of autobiography.

". . . I shall, without further preface, proceed to open up to you the present condition of my health, and to do that the more effectually, shall give you a kind of history of my life, after which you will easily learn why I keep my name a secret. . . . You must know then that, from my earliest infancy, I found always a strong inclination to books and letters. As our college education in Scotland, extending little further than the languages, ends commonly when we are about fourteen or fifteen years of age, I was after that left to my own choice in my reading, and found it incline me almost equally to books of reasoning and philosophy, and to poetry and the polite authors. Every one who is acquainted either with the philosophers or critics, knows that there is nothing yet established in either of these two sciences, and that they contain little more than endless disputes, even in the most fundamental articles. Upon examination of these, I found a certain boldness of temper growing in me, which was not inclined to submit to any authority in these subjects, but led me to seek out some new medium, by which truth might be established. After much study and reflection on this, at last, when I was about eighteen years of age, there seemed to be opened up to me a new scene of thought, which trans-

ported me beyond measure, and made me, with an ardour natural to young men, throw up every other pleasure or business to apply entirely to it. . . . I was infinitely happy in this course of life for some months; till at last, about the beginning of September, 1729, all my ardour seemed in a moment to be extinguished, and I could no longer raise my mind to that pitch, which formerly gave me such excessive pleasure. I felt no uneasiness or want of spirits, when I laid aside my book; and therefore never imagined there was any bodily distemper in the case, but that my coldness proceeded from a laziness of temper, which must be overcome by redoubling my application.[1] In this condition I remained for nine months, very uneasy to myself, as you may well imagine, but without growing any worse, which was a miracle. There was another particular, which contributed more than any thing, to waste my spirits and bring on me this distemper, which was, that having read many books of morality, such as Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch, and being smit with their beautiful representations of virtue and philosophy, I undertook the improvement of my temper and will, along with my reason and understanding. . . .

"Though I was sorry to find myself engaged with so tedious a distemper, yet the knowledge of it set me very much at ease, by satisfying me that my former coldness proceeded not from any defect of temper or genius, but from a disease to which any one may be subject. I now began to take some indulgence to myself; studied moderately, and only when I found my spirits at their highest pitch, leaving off before I was weary, and trifling away the rest of my time in the best manner I could. . . . [A statement of medical details intervenes.]

"Thus I have given you a full account of the condition of my body; and without staying to ask pardon, as I ought to do, for so tedious a story, shall explain to you how my

[1] In later years Hume was noted for his indolence. This may have been a survival of his early ill-health. See below, p. 380.

mind stood all this time, which on every occasion, especially in this distemper, have a very near connection together. Having now time and leisure to cool my inflamed imagination, I began to consider seriously how I should proceed in my philosophical inquiries. I found that the moral philosophy transmitted to us by antiquity laboured under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical, and depending more upon invention than experience: everyone consulted his fancy in erecting schemes of virtue and of happiness, without regarding human nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend. This, therefore, I resolved to make my principal study, and the source from which I would derive every truth in criticism as well as morality. I believe it is a certain fact, that most of the philosophers who have gone before us, have been overthrown by the greatness of their genius, and that little more is required to make a man succeed in this study, than to throw off all prejudices either for his own opinions or for those of others. At least this is all I have to depend on for the truth of my reasonings, which I have multiplied to such a degree, that within these three years, I find I have scribbled many a quire of paper, in which there is nothing contained but my own inventions. This, with the reading most of the celebrated books in Latin, French, and English, and acquiring the Italian, you may think a sufficient business, for one in perfect health, and so it would had it been done to any purpose; but my disease was a cruel encumbrance on me. I found that I was not able to follow out any train of thought, by one continued stretch of view, but by repeated interruptions, and by refreshing my eye from time to time upon other objects. Yet with this inconvenience I have collected the rude materials for many volumes; but in reducing these to words, when one must bring the idea he comprehended in gross, nearer to him, so as to contemplate its minutest parts, and keep it steadily in his eye, so as to copy these parts in order,—this I found imprac-

ticable for me, nor were my spirits equal to so severe an employment. Here lay my greatest calamity. I had no hopes of delivering my opinions with such elegance and neatness, as to draw to me the attention of the world, and I would rather live and die in obscurity than produce them maimed and imperfect.

"Such a miserable disappointment I scarce ever remember to have heard of. . . . I have noticed in the writings of the French mystics, and in those of our fanatics here, that when they give a history of the situation of their souls, they mention a coldness and desertion of the spirit, which frequently returns; and some of them, at the beginning, have been tormented with it many years. As this kind of devotion depends entirely on the force of passion, and consequently of the animal spirits, I have often thought that their case and mine were pretty parallel, and that their rapturous admirations might discompose the fabric of the nerves and brain, as much as profound reflections, and that warmth or enthusiasm which is inseparable from them."[2]

Here is Hume likening his state of mind to that of "French mystics." His experience had first been one of doubting, then seeking some new way to truth, then having it dawn upon him and being filled with joy, only in the end to lose sight of his vision and plod along unable to comprehend it. He had made a discovery. His mind, however, sunk back exhausted. Despair followed upon those months of spiritual exaltation.

Two distinct periods stand out in this story. One is that during which he examined for himself the fundamental articles about which philosophers were always in disagreement. Seeing other minds fail to establish any certainties only made him bold to try his own way. There was "much study and reflection" spent on this enterprise. It ended

[2] Burton, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. 30-9; Green & Grose, *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 18 *ff.*

with the "new scene of thought" which transported him beyond measure and completely occupied his attention for several months. He was then in his nineteenth year.

A second period was that when he was working out the details of the new philosophy opened to him. He had a struggle to keep his mind constantly engaged in the work. He put himself under a Stoic discipline, for he was captured by the ideal of self-mastery and independence which such writers as Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch had portrayed. By a careful regimen he succeeded in carrying on his programme. This defined itself to him as an extensive investigation into human nature. He had seen that all the errors of philosophy arose from the fact that imagination determined men much more than they recognized—there could be no secure truth for him, then, until he had explored this aspect of the nature of man. Hence he was reading voraciously, "most of the celebrated books in Latin, French, and English."[3] He acquired Italian. And he had written many quires of paper, "the rude materials for many volumes." It was the inability to compose these materials into a whole book that brought on his despair and impelled him to seek aid from Dr. George Cheyne,[4] in the hope of acquiring the physical vigor, once more, "to endure the fatigue of deep and abstruse thinking."

The topics occupying Hume's attention during this latter period, we recognise at once, constituted the subject-matter of his *Treatise of Human Nature*. All judgments upon truth, beauty and conduct depended upon the nature of man. Without knowledge of human nature there would never be any true understanding or happiness. Hume conceived himself to have made an advance toward such fundamental knowledge, a "science of man." And it was this

[3] Cf. G. Compayré, *La Philosophie de David Hume*, Paris, 1873, p. 16; G. B. Hill, *op. cit.* XXI, and the quotation of Dr. Johnson (p. 7): "Why, Sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French."

[4] Burton was unable to ascertain whether or not this letter was actually sent to Dr. Cheyne, Vol. I, pp. 42-3.

body of truth which he feared would come before the world "maimed and imperfect," unless he escaped the disability of ill health. We have already seen his tenacious ambition—it sent him forth to France, at this time, to compose his book. Only two years later, when he was twenty-five,[5] he had the first book of the *Treatise* finished. He returned to England to publish it, choosing to risk its imperfections, and not to live or die obscure.

The initial discovery, too, that filled Hume with such transports of joy and opened a whole new prospect to him, we can readily identify. It was surely the fact, somehow brought home to him, that man is vastly presuming whenever he uses the maxim of cause and effect. This was his great insight. No sooner was he possessed of it than he turned his thought to study the nature of man with all its presumptuous impulses.

But the still earlier reflections and studies which had led Hume to this momentous discovery are unknown to us. In the *Treatise* we do not read of the way he actually came to ask *Why a Cause is Always Necessary*. He simply proposes the question, and discusses it. The thoughts preparing his own mind for that "total alteration in philosophy"[6] are nowhere recorded. It was, perhaps, the very lack of such an introduction which kept his contemporaries from seeing what he meant. And until we recover, for our part, something of those earliest thoughts, we are not likely, even now, to grasp the rationale of his philosophy.

He was examining the "fundamental articles" which had been endlessly in dispute, and studying how he might, by some new means, establish truth in the fields of literary criticism and philosophy. For his studies in literature we can reasonably look to the various *Essays* published shortly after the *Treatise*. But there is no separate publication, at that time of his life, in which we can find any discus-

[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 98; and *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 36-7.
[6] See letter to Henry Home, Feb. 13, 1739, in Burton, Vol. I, p. 105.

sions of philosophy other than those incorporated in the *Treatise*. It is commonly supposed, therefore, that Hume approached his questioning of our use of the maxim of cause and effect through an examination of the general problem of the Cartesian philosophy, namely, how we can know the real if we have only ideas caused by the real acting upon us through the medium of our physical organism. This is a quite plausible supposition, even though Hume actually deals with the reality of an external world only after his treatment of the entire problem of "knowledge and probability."[7] It was, surely, one of the fundamental topics of philosophy, like those in other late sections of the *Treatise*, dealing with substance, the immateriality of the soul, and personal identity. All these represent, probably, some very early studies. They are comprised under the titles *Of Ancient Philosophy* and *Of Modern Philosophy*, as if they contain the older doctrines he left behind him when he found the new view that would bring to pass a "revolution" in philosophy. Nevertheless, we have no evidence for the peculiar importance of any one of these discussions.

It seems, rather, that the truly illuminating studies were those on religion. When he first wrote the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* he could not refrain from a reminiscence of his earliest youth. He then said to Elliot that he had struggled with his own thoughts and filled a notebook with such debates *before he was twenty*.[8] The notebook recorded both his attempts to confirm the common opinion, that is, the belief in a veritable God, and his failures to establish anything as certain. This opposition within his own mind persisted, with alternate belief and doubt, and seems never to have been resolved until the completion of the *Dialogues*, about thirty years later. It had its

[7] Cf. R. Richter, in *Skeptizismus*, etc., Vol. II, *Die Darstellung der Skepsis David Humes*, Part IV.
[8] Quoted above, p. 14.

roots in the restlessness of his imagination which kept him from following his natural inclination to believe with other men. He could not help seeing many points of view other than the orthodox. Now this reminiscence of his intellectual life before he was twenty seems to indicate what was happening when he was "about eighteen years of age." For, in another letter to Elliot about the same time, still dealing primarily with the *Dialogues*, Hume told him that he had not even *planned* the *Treatise* until he was twenty-one.[9] Thus he himself placed his discussions of religion definitely prior to the conceiving of his treatise on human nature. But what immediately opened to him this whole field of inquiry into the nature of man was his discovery about cause and effect. These facts suggest that he made this profound discovery about causation while he was arguing with himself concerning the realities of religious belief. It is, perhaps, the issue discussed in the belated *Dialogues* that best illustrates and expresses the meaning of Hume's "philosophical scepticism."

When Hume wrote to Dr. Cheyne, therefore, that he had been studying the opinions of philosophers about fundamental articles and seeking to establish their truth for himself he implied, it seems, that the basic truths were those pertaining to the religious life. Any one living at the time would infer this from his words. For the year 1734 came in the full tide of the "Deistic" controversy. The attempt on the part of some thinkers to formulate a reasonable creed not depending upon the accidents of time and place and circumstance led to very lively and momentous debates about the irreducible articles of Christian belief. All quoted authority, and all appealed to reason. This was the dominant theme of philosophical thought at the time. Hume's letter would undoubtedly convey to that

[9] Burton, Vol. I, p. 337. Cf. Cucheval-Clarigny, "David Hume, Sa Vie et ses Écrits," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1856, Vol. VI, p. 115, who regarded the genesis of the ideas in the *Dialogues* as *contemporaneous* with the thought of the *Treatise*.

physician his preoccupation with religion amongst the other topics of philosophy.[10]

Although Hume burned the book of his notes on religion about the time he began to write the *Dialogues*, he appears, nevertheless, to have overlooked a few stray leaves of paper to which he had committed something indicative of his own hardy speculations. Burton observes that these papers seem to have "accidentally survived the loss of many others" belonging to the youthful period.[11] Their exact date he cannot establish. But they clearly reflect Hume's wide reading. It is apparent, too, as Burton says, that the notes on "Philosophy" have a certain unity, that is, they concentrate upon one definite topic. It is the issue that was to haunt Hume for thirty years.

"Philosophy

"The accounts we have of the sentiments of the ancient philosophers not very distinct nor consistent. Cicero contradicts himself in two sentences: in saying that Thales allowed the ordering of the world by a mind, and in saying that Anaxagoras was the first.

"Strato's atheism the most dangerous of the ancient—holding the origin of the world from nature, or a matter

[10] Dr. Cheyne was a person, as Hume said, "of great learning beyond his own profession." He was something of a philosopher himself. In his book, *The English Malady*, he told of his own youthful studies in science and religion, referring the reader to his earlier work, *The Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion* (1705)—Burton, Vol. I, pp. 44-5. He believed in a theism, arguing from design. But he entertained seriously the ancient Epicurean hypothesis, and became quite caustic in his criticism of the ordinary notion of Providence: "By confining it to a dirty mole-hill of a single planet, some pious and enlightened persons have taught that . . . all this complex and *infinite* variety of noble and wonderfully contrived *organs*, were designed solely for the preservation of one *animal* and the propagation of its kind." See chap. v, pp. 209-10, in the 1724 edition, Strahan, London. To the "candor and generosity" of this man Hume laid open his own struggle, appealing to the physician through the philosopher.

[11] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 125.

endued with activity. Bayle thinks there are none but the Cartesians can refute this atheism.[12]

"A Stratonician could retort the arguments of all the sects of philosophy. Of the Stoics, who maintained their God to be fiery and compound; and of the Platonicians, who asserted the ideas to be distinct from the Deity. The same question,—Why the parts or ideas of God had that particular arrangement?—is as difficult as why the world had.[13]

"Some pretend that there can be no necessity, according to the system of atheism, 'because even matter cannot be determined without something superior to determine it.'—Fénelon.[14]

"Three proofs of the existence of a God: 1st, Some thing necessarily existent, and what is so is infinitely perfect. 2d, The idea of infinite must come from an infinite being. 3d, The idea of infinite perfection implies that of actual existence.

"There is a remarkable story to confirm the Cartesian philosophy of the brain. A man hurt by the fall of a horse, forgot about twenty years of his life, and remembered what went before in a much more lively manner than usual."

It seems, then, as if *the* problem in philosophy, for Hume, was to explain the world-order. Here the traditional view was that God gave to nature the arrangement which it now appears to have in all its parts. To confirm this age-long argument from design the Cartesians had brought forward the conception of a Being whose existence is necessary and infinite and most real, a Being we call God, and a Being more than Nature. But Hume was not confirmed in the faith by these arguments. His fancy was

[12] Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres Diverses*, The Hague, 1727, Vol. III, *Continuation des Pensées Diverses*, Arts. xxi, p. 217; cvi, p. 334; cxi, p. 341.
[13] Cf. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, in *Characteristics*, Part II, sec. 4, *Matter and Thought.*
[14] Fénelon, *Traité de l'Existence de Dieu*, Charpentier, Paris, 1871, Part II, pp. 98-120.

caught, rather, by "Strato's atheism," the view that order is in matter from the beginning. This dispenses with a shaping and directing Providence. Yet it leaves as much order and necessity as the theist claims. And although Bayle thought the Cartesian distinction between Spirit and Matter afforded a solution of that ancient dispute, in favor of theism, Hume proposed to himself certain points which left good grounds for the conception of Strato—How are we to explain the spiritual or ideal order itself? If we must go beyond the fact of an existing order we are obliged to seek, impartially, the origin of a divine plan itself as well as that of a material world. We have no logic on our side when we suppose a Mind to be the ultimate source of the physical organisation of nature. Indeed, did not even Descartes himself show that the only kind of mind we really know depends, in turn, upon the material body and brain of man? We cannot see the end of this search for the cause of order.[15] It would be reasonable, then, not to go beyond Nature at all, but simply to affirm order as the very character of the world of natural events. We need not seek further for the significance of this appearance of things. Nature is sufficient to itself. This "naturalism"[16] it was that made Hume's mind restless, and prevented his finding any enduring satisfaction in the reasonings of other philosophers to establish the existence of the God of religion.

These stray notes disclose something, too, of the books Hume was reading during this period of internal debate over the religious view of the world. Bayle is often mentioned. It may have been through the article on *Spinoza* in his *Dictionary* that Hume learned of Strato's naturalism. But the work of Bayle was itself very considerably inspired by Cicero's dialogues *On the Nature of the Gods*. And Cicero had long been an inspiration to Hume. It was

[15] This discussion is given fully in Part IV of the later *Dialogues*.
[16] This term was employed by Bayle, *op. cit.* LXXIV, Vol. III, p. 294, by Shaftesbury, *op. cit.*, sec. 5, and by W. Warburton, *Works*, London, 1789, Vol. I, *The Divine Legation*, etc., pp. 82-3.

Cicero and Virgil he had pored over when he ought to have been reading law. He alludes, in the first note we have quoted, to Cicero's inconsistency in speaking of both Thales and Anaxagoras as the first theists. In the second note he remarks upon the significance of Strato's "atheism." We find Cicero's statements on these several topics in sections ten, eleven and thirteen of Book One of the *De Natura Deorum*. Hume seems to have actually been writing a commentary upon this work, taking the points in the order of reading, and studying the other "celebrated" writings on this subject, in Latin, French and English, notably those of the Cartesians. These are the thoughts which formed his mind for his own great contribution to philosophy.

The dialogues of Cicero *On the Nature of the Gods* present the issue between naturalism and theism in a peculiarly valuable way. They are no mere display of the famous eloquence of their author—they bespeak a certain personal interest in the question. For Cicero wrote them at that time when fortune had turned her face from him: he was no longer the outstanding man of affairs in the Roman Commonwealth. Besides this humiliation, he suffered deep grief over losing his daughter Tullia. His letters show him reflecting much upon the supernatural.[17] The meaning of human life, the destiny of man, the reality of a Providence, these things were genuinely important to him. And thus, though he conducted the debate in the manner of the Academic sceptic, disputing every position and assuming nothing to be certain, he availed himself of the right to consider that to be the truth which would enable him to live feeling that human life had some real significance. He chose the Stoic theism as the most probable and salutary belief.[18]

[17] W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, Macmillan, London, 1911, pp. 384-9.
[18] See the concluding words of the book and sec. 5 of *De Divinatione* written immediately afterwards.

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We are given a picture of four friends reasoning together at the house of Cotta who is an Academic sceptic, and, incidentally, a priest of the national religion. An Epicurean and a Stoic who is an especial friend of Cicero, and Cicero himself are there. Cicero is, however, merely a listener.

The Epicurean claims that his master had brought a light into the world, dispelling all fear and misery from human life. All other thinkers had struggled in confusion. They mixed two different views in such a way as never to find a straightforward solution to their problem. The world itself was God—God was a directing spirit distinct from the world: these conceptions even Plato never distinguished from each other. Sometimes God was the architect of Nature, at other times Nature was eternally self-sufficient. The followers of Plato had difficulties whichever way they tended. If there were a God, a Providence, they could not declare his ways to men. If Nature herself were a living and intelligent Being they could not give any precise idea of the existence of such a universal Mind and Will. The Platonists endeavored, in vain, to establish a spiritual meaning to the appearances. After them came the followers of Aristotle who tended toward a naturalism, notably that Strato who regarded Nature as endowed with certain capacities of self-organisation which blindly worked toward order. But this attempt was also futile. And the notions of the Stoics were beneath serious consideration, more like the dreams of dotards than philosophic opinions. For Epicurus had meantime come upon the scene. He pointed out that men were bound somehow to get God into their world, be it as Providence or as an aspect of Nature, and he observed that all nations had some such preconception of a Deity. However differently men might describe this innate idea they were all speaking about the same thing. It would be, then, the part of wisdom simply to declare this fact, that God exists. And philosophers shaking off the hampering education, custom,

and law of their several communities, would not limit God by those local and temporary conceptions of their generation—God was to them the Infinite Being, mighty, self-sufficient, happy, immortal. Thus Epicurus set men free to be happy themselves, for they needed not trouble themselves with superstitious fears of a God who watched over them and worked his purposes in the world to their weal or woe.

Now Cotta the host speaks. He does not intend to give a demonstration of the existence of divinity. Being a priest himself he is content to believe the traditional teachings. If he had to prove them without the aid of this background he would plead for endless delay, like that Simonides of old who found the matter becoming more obscure the longer he meditated upon it. But Cotta is a Sceptic in philosophy. He cannot refrain from criticising arguments advanced by others.

The Epicureans assert the existence of Gods on the ground of a common consent of mankind to their reality. They also hold to an atomism. It is true, this is not quite the rigorous view of Democritus, for Epicurus attributed a certain arbitrary swerving or tendency in the motion of atoms, to account for the formation of an orderly world. But the real is this body of atoms. If the Gods are also real, they seem to have no place or function in this atomic scheme of things. They are only real as the thoughts of men. Do they then remain Divine,—or real?

Moreover, the Epicureans maintain the senses to be infallible guides to truth. But the Infinite Deity whom they proclaim to be real in the minds of men is no visible being. God must then be a fiction, and cease, once again, to have any significant reality whatsoever.

The Sceptic interprets common sense as he sees it. The only way divinity gains a real existence for men is through some sensible image much more definite than the mere thought of an Infinite. The Gods that men recognise are beings whom wise men of old have depicted, and poets,

painters, and sculptors have represented with life-like art. Gods so fashioned are real presences to mankind. And when they are thus present, and not as some dim, ill-defined Infinite, outside all mortal influence, they must count for something in the world and in human affairs. God is necessarily real as a Providence. In this respect the Stoics are the authentic interpreters of the common opinion. They are not senile dreamers. They are in touch with the realities of life. They look with their eyes upon the world and its many parts, the heavens, the earth, the seas; they perceive the splendor and beauty of these works; they observe the regular courses of all things—then they infer that some supremely excellent Being must have made that world, and must be moving and directing it now, and always. The Sceptic sees what the Stoics mean by this inference. He suspects, indeed, their venture of thought. But it is, at any rate, a reflection on the natural judgment men will make, one which has some meaning for human life. By contrast, the Epicurean philosophy offers nothing: the Infinite God, indifferent to all that is of moment in our personal life, is virtually no God at all. Epicurus allows the Divine in words but actually dispels all religion along with the abhorred, nameless terrors of superstition.

So the ancient problem remains. Is this world self-ordering or is it in need of a creative intelligence, a Being not merely preserving order in things but safeguarding, especially, those things that mankind values? Is Nature essentially indifferent, or is it witness to something Providential?

The Stoic is so delighted with his host's appreciation of the view of his school that he begs him to go into it more fully. This the sceptical philosopher declines to do, for he finds it easier to suggest the opinions others hold than defend them as his own—he is the critic, not the apologist for any creed. The Stoic then has to speak for himself, which he does at a quite inordinate length.

The theme is: God exists, a Being intelligent, powerful,

and good, a Ruler of Nature and a very real Providence to man. The reality of God is too evident to require any proof. The whole universe is witness to it. Omens, predictions, and prodigies of Nature show it. The very regularity of motion in the heavens, where there are so many distinct and various bodies, sun, moon, and stars, all in beautiful order, this convinces us at once that something more than chance alone accounts for these things. In man's own life we find testimony to the divine, for man comes into the world possessed of the power to live and reason—that to which he owes his being must surely be no less endowed. So God is Life and Mind. But God is manifestly superior to man in these qualities of being. The fiery nature of the heavens is of the same sort as the life-heat of human creatures; and the heavens even exhibit the capacity of self-motion like human will;—thus God is a life-principle diffused throughout Nature. God is universal and infinite Life and Mind.

The Stoic at once begins to lose himself in Nature. The concept of Nature is not, however, to be used indiscriminately. It does not apply to everything that exists. It has no meaning with respect to a clod of earth, or a piece of stone or anything that seems merely to be a casual grouping of parts in a whole. A tree illustrates best what the term signifies; its growth and existence do not have the appearance of chance, but of order and something like human intention. Nature is purposive, and that is the meaning of this universal Deity.

Such truth may, indeed, be doubted. But the sceptic must really be so only for purposes of argument. For any contemplation of the world leads naturally and immediately to this thought of a divine purpose. Those who fail to realise the truth are simply too stupid to perceive what lies before them. The Sceptics themselves recognise this, as Cotta himself has already confessed, but they will not allow it to be the whole truth because of their excessive zeal for a perfect knowledge. However, the natural judg-

ment of mankind upon the facts of life and the world is that some Being takes care of all things.

The Stoics offer specific arguments for this providence. Outward nature and human life both evince the presence in the world of a Being with intelligence and will like that which man knows in his own thought and action. Now the orderly phenomena of the heavens and those of the earth, of which men have achieved scientific knowledge, these present to us a purposive activity not unlike that we have in human society and civilisation. The Stoic looks to the starry skies and then to the moral law within man. There is thus a Law of Nature universal and it has for its end the same thing as the law of civil life, namely, the maintenance of the good in this world. God is thus proved a wise power making for righteousness.

Throughout these remarks the Stoic has suffered from that very confusion of thought with which the Epicurean charged all philosophers. Stoicism stands upon both the infinity and the personal nature of God. Sometimes Nature is the theme, when the Deity is depicted as the whole organised world, universal, and therefore infinite, and quite sufficient to itself. But no sooner is that imagery ventured than the Stoic swings to the other extreme, endowing God with the most human character possible, especially the affections of love and benevolence. There is a restless uncertainty in this mingling of anthropomorphism with naturalism. This the Sceptic discerns, and he now suggests that the matter ought to be made more clear. At this the Epicurean stirs impatiently, for he hopes to see his opponent thoroughly taken down by their host—but he is disappointed at once, for Cotta promptly says that the Stoic philosophy seems to him at least a connected system of thought, however perplexing and vague, and not a medley of irrelevant ideas like the philosophy of Epicurus.

What Stoicism fails to accomplish, however, is the definite exclusion of another view that continually occurs to us as we listen to the arguments. If the world is conceiv-

able as sufficient to itself, as working toward order in every part and in the whole, as Nature with purpose inherent in it, then what need is there of a Deity?

It is possible to regard the regularity of physical events as simply the law of nature. The harmony and general agreement of all things with each other is an undisputed fact. It seems as if all nature were united by ties of blood and life. A certain power of sympathy joins together all the parts of the universe. Well, let this be so; the truer it is, the less reason we have to suppose that a divine intelligence is present as something above Nature. Of course the ground for the Stoic assertion of a Deity distinct from nature is that the occurrences of nature are not merely regular but that they conspire to the welfare of human creatures. God is nothing less than Providence. Yet if we turn to human society, with which the Stoic likened the whole world, we find that the laws governing the conduct of men toward each other reveal no unmistakable loving purpose. Justice is not Love. And that vaunted human reason is a source of as much mischief as good. If we are to judge concerning the nature of God from human affairs, we must conclude that God is really quite indifferent to the good and the bad. God the indifferent Being is virtually the same as brutal, careless Nature.

But Cotta makes haste to repudiate any intention of denying religious belief. He is only showing that the Stoics cannot prove their position because another view is very plausible. And the Sceptic would not even broach this naturalism were he not convinced that morality in no way depends upon such speculative views. The conscience of mankind has developed in its own right, and is quite unaffected by theories and hypotheses. Moreover Cotta himself considers religion to have much the same natural security. He believes in the things it teaches men for other reasons than intellectual argument.

Cicero tells us, in conclusion, that he regards the Stoic position as nearest the truth. He chooses to believe a the-

ism, in preference to the equally tenable naturalism which the Sceptic has proposed. This choice is made for the sake of his own personal life.[19]

There is something in this work of Cicero's that made it take deep root in the Christian tradition and flourish on through the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, becoming thence a pervasive influence in modern thought and literature. It was studied by the Church Fathers. Augustine was especially attracted to it and his first published philosophical dialogues, *Contra Academicos*, seem at once inspired by it and directed against it. The moral Stoicism in it assimilated well with the Christian teaching. Upon the Revival of Learning other features came to be appreciated. The Copernican astronomy opened a world-view engaging the imagination of Descartes, Spinoza, and other great modern thinkers—"the new system of the world" progressively discovered by Kepler and Galileo, made men consider the immensity, the infinity, the impersonal transcendency of Nature to all mere human purpose. Thus Descartes and Malebranche and their followers took up philosophy where Augustine had left it. They argued from the conception of the Infinite to its necessary existence, and that Infinite was the philosophic representative of the God of religion. Some of the Cartesians employed the argument that whatever excellence springs from a cause must of necessity reveal what that cause is in its own nature, that man, the creature of intelligence and will, discovers to us God, his creator, as a divine Intelligence and good Being. Locke was very ready to acknowledge his own inspiration from Cicero, for he took the motto of his *Conduct of the Understanding* from the *De Natura Deorum*. In Berkeley the old Stoic assumption of all causation being essentially

[19] J. B. Mayor suggests the possibility that the *De Natura Deorum* was a posthumous publication, which may mean that it was very personal. *Preface* to Vol. III, p. ix, his edition, Cambridge, 1885.

spiritual developed into a most extreme dogmatism in his denial of matter.

Meantime there had been mingling with this Cartesian stream of thought the influence of Francis Bacon whose *Novum Organum* and *Advancement of Learning* emphasised the more sceptical elements in Cicero. Then there was the Deistic movement which had begun with Lord Herbert of Cherbury and culminated about the time of Matthew Tindal (1730)—the Deists often went back to Cicero, and their notion of an argument from the common consent of mankind to the idea of God undoubtedly hails from his book. The tendencies of Deism were those of the earlier Reformation in the Church. We find both Calvin and Luther admiring these dialogues of Cicero. Thus Orthodox and free-thinkers both drew from them. Secular writers like Montaigne and Charron gave currency to the sceptical attitude. Pierre Bayle combined a scepticism and a mysticism, attacking vigorously, from such a remarkable stronghold, the arguments of the current Deism. Thus in every country literary men worked, mindful of their "Tully," repeating his thoughts in every variety of form to an age ready for all sorts of discovery, whether in the geography of the world, or in the heavens, or in the ultimate nature of all things. Cicero's book came to be an ingredient in the education of Europe. It offered moral and religious views and at the same time critical observations. Thus it was still a living force in the eighteenth century, as well as in the Renaissance and Middle Ages.[20] It came to Hume a much-quoted writing, a philosophical classic.

As we have seen from those few surviving notes on Philosophy, Hume interested himself especially in the opinions of Bayle on the subject of Cicero's dialogues. Bayle was a professed Calvinist and, at the same time, an ad-

[20] A detailed study of the *De Natura Deorum* in history may be found in Th. Zielinski, *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1908.

mirer of Montaigne whose own first attempt in the field of literature seems to have been a translation of the *Natural Theology* of Raimond Sébonde for whom he later wrote an *Apology* in the *Essays*,—a defense of philosophic scepticism in religion. Bayle considers human reason an instrument solely of criticism. By argument no one is ever induced to believe. Any position we take discovers insuperable difficulties and even contradictions within it, so that we cannot abide by it, if we rely purely upon our intellect. Bayle illustrates this with regard to two subjects, one the existence and nature of Deity, and the other the existence of evil. The arguments of the Manicheans for the parity of an evil principle in the world with the good are very natural and quite as strong as those of religious men for the exclusive Providence of God. For man recognises in himself a two-fold nature, and discerns this same character in his universe. We cannot persuade him against this obvious testimony of life and observation that only Good really prevails. Man will believe, of course, in this Providence and in the Immortality of the Soul. But such belief must be in the nature of a revelation. In like manner every argument for the reality of a God may be countered with another argument which dispenses with a Deity as first cause and source of order. One argument alone stands exempt from such opposition, the Cartesian reasoning from the conception of an infinite Being to the existence of such a Being. Yet this argument itself rests upon an article of faith that cannot be proved but must simply be revealed to us as a truth, namely, the absolute distinction between spirit and matter. Mind and matter man knows in himself. The conception of an infinite Spirit distinct from nature he is ready to believe only because of this direct witness in his own being. Bayle comes again and again to this direct personal witnessing. His is the position of a mystic.

Another figure moving in the tradition of Cicero, and likewise stirred by Montaigne, was Francis Bacon. He

avows himself, in *The Great Instauration*, an "improved" Academic Sceptic. The sceptical attitude is a state of mind preparatory to a methodical knowledge. Doubting defends philosophy against errors. It calls attention to what needs to be more carefully considered. Though some of those ancients like Cicero were often guilty of an eloquent displaying of their wits rather than an ambition to achieve substantial truth, still there were others who were really sincere in their doubt. They struck a happy mean between arrogant dogmatism and despairing scepticism. They thought it better not to dispute endlessly whether knowledge were possible or not but rather to put matters to the test of experience. This method of experiment Bacon himself vigorously sponsors. We are to trust the first deliverances of our senses. The natural judgment of man upon his perception is right. To obtain a genuine science of nature we need only put ourselves in the various positions from which we can perceive what is there and then infer what our common experience suggests. Our chief task is, therefore, to produce the data for our knowledge, by investigation and experiment. The experimental method is to open a new realm of knowledge to mankind comparable, in significance, to the geographical discoveries of a Columbus.

In theology Bacon remains more sceptical. The contemplation of God's works yields us knowledge of God, but only an imperfect knowledge. For we are lost in wonder. But wondering is an attitude of expectation. The thing we wonder at is either too subtle or too great for our ready comprehension. Yet it is in this very experience that we know God. Our philosophy cannot serve to enlighten us further except to refute the arguments of those who pretend to say there is no God. Philosophy is fitted to ascertain the laws of nature. And when men realise that nature is always an affair of law, they will all confess the wisdom and power and goodness of the Creator. Miracles are quite unnecessary, then, to the establishment of religious belief. They are valuable only in bringing back the idolatrous and

superstitious to a true sense of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Philosophers must do no more than accurately present Nature to men. All vehemence and subtlety in their disputes will be a danger to both science and religion, to the former by making it fantastic or superstitious, to the latter by introducing heresy. All attempts to interpret Nature in detail by reference to "final causes" will likewise injure our faith as well as our true knowledge of things. All imaginings of God in the personal and human form are quite vain and impious. Our business is simply to advance learning by finding the physical causes for events of Nature. This research, so far from drawing us away from God, only makes us appreciate that God is truly the End of all Nature,—Providence.

The writings of sceptics like Montaigne, Bayle, and Francis Bacon[21] encouraged in Hume that spirit which he described so well in one of his literary essays, *The Sceptic*: "I have long entertained a suspicion, with regard to the decisions of philosophers upon all subjects, and found in myself a greater inclination to dispute, than assent to their conclusions." But he was also learning from Cicero and Seneca the dignity of the Stoic moral ideal. When it came to the "common conduct of life" he felt their convictions, as he tells in a companion essay, *The Stoic*: "There surely is a Being who presides over the universe; and who, with infinite wisdom and power, has reduced the jarring elements into just order and proportion. Let speculative reasoners dispute, how far this beneficent being extends his care, and whether he prolongs our existence beyond the grave, in order to bestow on virtue its just reward, and render it fully triumphant. The man of morals, without deciding any thing on so dubious a subject, is satisfied with

[21] So much did Hume admire the ideal of Francis Bacon that he published his own *Treatise* as *An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*. It was to advance learning in the province of man's own nature.

the portion, marked out to him by the supreme disposer of all things."[22] As a "man of morals" Hume found himself somewhat confirmed in these sentiments by the works of a living writer, George Berkeley.

The avowed aim of Bishop Berkeley was to support morality and religion by means of philosophy. He was a young man of twenty-five when he published his *Principles of Human Knowledge*. At college he had read Plato and Cicero with enthusiasm. He alluded, particularly, to the *De Natura Deorum*, in an essay that was written the same year as his *Principles*.[23] From Cicero he adopted, later, the dialogue style. He believed in an ideal world and he believed philosophy should be consecrated to the discovery of these high matters. It was a direct challenge to Bacon's dictum about "final causes," when he wrote: "For, after all, what deserves the first place in our studies is, the consideration of God and our Duty; which to promote, as it was the main drift and design of my labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if, by what I have said, I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the presence of God."[24] At the end of his *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, three years later, he makes the opponent of his own views observe: "You set out upon the same principles that Academics, Cartesians, and the like sects usually do; and for a long time it looked as if you were advancing their philosophical scepticism: but, in the end, your conclusions are directly opposite to theirs." Berkeley aims to demonstrate a religious position.

To prove the existence of God the Providence Berkeley first attacks the conception of matter. It is the notion of a reality not present to our perception. Indeed it is a sheer abstraction. There is no reason whatsoever for our concluding the existence of such an entity apart from the sensible appearances. Our inference itself is only a prejudice.

[22] *Works, Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 210, 213.
[23] *Berkeley's Complete Works*, ed. Fraser, Oxford, 1901, Vol. IV, p. 109.
[24] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 347, Conclusion.

Still, this erroneous deduction must be explained. We find that all men know they perceive ideas of which they are sure they are not the cause or author, since they have not willed them to be, and, recognising in these presences something independent of their own thought and will, they have carelessly supposed such particular objects of their perception to exist literally outside their own perception and quite distinct from it. Philosophers follow along with the rest of mankind. But they cannot avoid discerning that the supposedly external things are still perceptions like thoughts, images, and fancies. They correct the first naïve mistake, but only by making a more egregious one. The independent perceptions are still ideas in the mind like all other ideas, but they owe their existence in it to separate material objects which impress them upon it: the objects cause these ideas to appear as effects exactly resembling themselves. Hence Matter seems real, an invisible but necessary reality. Nevertheless the logical necessity for this conclusion is quite spurious. We cannot possibly argue for the existence of anything "outside" the mind because we have no perception of "outside" at all. For Berkeley had made a discovery of his own, in the field of Optics, published in his *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709). He had shown that we acquire the sense of distance by experience of the motion of our eyes and body —there is no single datum revealing the fact of extension out from our own bodies in space. All judgments of such extension are inferences. Now inferences will always invite scrutiny. Let us examine this particular one, of matter being a reality outside the mind. What we know directly is that events in our mental world appear as an order which we do not cause. We must ascribe some cause to this orderly appearance of things. We must infer something, in other words, besides what we perceive with our senses. The materialists infer another reality, something like the perceived reality in its quality but utterly different in existence from anything known to us. It is difficult to see what

they gain by supposing such an unknown ultimate reality. It may as well be Nothing. "Matter" is, for all human purposes, a non-existent.

There is another alternative, however, to that futile inference of a Matter independent of our perception,—one based upon more positive knowledge. We know ourselves as spirits every moment we are conscious. To perceive is not merely to have an image present, but actively to take it in, and imagine or sense or think it. We are intimately aware of this at all times. In such spiritual activity alone do we find an adequate analogy for the origin of those ideas which we do not cause as they appear in their appointed order. This order of nature has for its cause, then, an agency like the activity of our own minds. What we confront in the apparently independent, external world is not material existence but a Spirit. It is not unknown, unintelligible Matter but a Mind and Will like our own. For there are certain rules observable in the conduct of natural events, "laws of nature," and these laws we can understand just as we know our own plans and purposes. Moreover, by our knowledge of the regular and uniform course of nature we are able to accomplish our own will in that seemingly foreign world of external reality. From his study of vision Berkeley saw in nature a visual language, giving us information, direction, admonition, as if another person were talking to us. This aid to the winning of our human good reveals that God is not merely a wise power but an incomprehensibly good one. God is truly Providence. And such a conclusion has much more meaning for us than the supposition of an unperceivable Matter. Although God is himself an invisible King he is to be conceived with the qualities and reality not of inert things but of such living, active persons as we know ourselves to be in our consciousness. There is no significance in a mere "reality," or an "external reality," but there is much in living personality. To conclude from the appearances of things that a personal God exists is to satisfy at once all

our motives for inquiry into the ultimate nature of things.

This inference to a Providence is not only preferable to that of materialism but is logically necessary. For Berkeley thought he had a decisive *demonstration* of God's Being and Nature. There is nothing we are so absolutely sure of as our own being, our spiritual reality. We witness this intuitively, as Locke had said, and we know it whenever we think and will to do something. Our spirit manifests itself in such acts of purpose. But we cannot miss the fact that not all events in our ken are the expression of our individual purposes. There is a whole sensible world with its own general laws of motion and influence. It is intelligible to us, nevertheless, and amenable to our human reason. It testifies, therefore, to the presence of a spirit proportionably greater than our own but essentially of the same personal nature. So long as we acknowledge a world we must admit the existence of this God to account for its known character.

This proof is advanced on the strength of several important assumptions, which Berkeley himself discloses. The first is that we must conceive every existence to have a cause.[25] The ideas *we* do not cause must certainly have *some* cause. It is, in the language of the author, "repugnant," that is, self-contradictory, for the ideas we identify with the sensible world independent of ourselves *simply to be there* without some other reality to *produce* them. We must necessarily look to something distinct from them in order to understand their existence. The ordinary person lacks imagination; he thinks the cause is in every respect like what we perceive and he supposes it to be merely external to our own minds. To Berkeley this bare externality is no definition of anything actually real. The external is a term entirely relative to our perceptions themselves. But

[25] Cicero had assumed this maxim in *De Divinatione*, chap. XXVIII, and *De Fato*, chap. IX.

the spiritual on the other hand is an absolute fact of consciousness. Berkeley assumes this truth without question. And the essential character of a spiritual reality, he further assumes, is activity, power, agency, or causation. When we perceive, understand, reflect upon our ideas and when we will to perform some action or other, we exhibit the spiritual that is embodied in us. The things we perceive and enact are not themselves capable of such powers. The perceived is always "inert," the perceiver alone active. Thus, compelled to define *some cause* for the sensible world which we do not fabricate ourselves, we have no option but to conceive that necessary cause as a Mind and Will like our own.

Hume was reading Berkeley with a mind made keen for criticism by both ancient and modern scepticism. He could not fail to discern the places, therefore, where Berkeley himself gives the lie to these assumptions. At one point Berkeley attempts to humble the pretensions of scientists to a true knowledge through discovery of physical causes, by asserting that all science is incapable of "demonstration," because we know the general laws of nature only by experience but cannot know of a certainty that the course of nature itself will be always uniform and in accordance with such empirical laws as we have already discovered. It follows that any deduction from scientific knowledge of fact is not absolutely certain. We are not as sure of it as we can be of deductions in logic. For in strict logical reasoning the contrary is not possible: here we see that there may be some other course of nature, totally at variance with the order of things so far known to us in experience. Now Berkeley has claimed for his own argument to God the value of demonstration. Yet it rests entirely upon the necessity of a cause for every event, a maxim which he now declares to be in doubt for the purposes of physical science. Unwittingly he has armed a critic like

Hume with a weapon whereby his own pretentious construction of an exclusively spiritual order will be tumbled to the ground. Spirit in Nature goes the way of Matter.

In other places Berkeley further weakens his position. Whenever he launches into poetical descriptions of the natural order, under the inspiration of Plato or Cicero, he speaks of Nature herself as a beautiful and complete whole informed with powers that give it perfect organisation. It is a cosmos. It dwarfs man and his meagre art and power to shape things to his will. It even transcends human understanding. No scientist with all the genius of ages at his command has been able to produce by mechanical means a single organised vegetable or animal body. It would seem from this that matter itself might contain within it capacities of organisation more wonderful even than those of the human mind. There is suggested the possibility that all agency, causation, power, whatever we choose to call it, is not exclusively the possession of a spiritual being. It would not be necessary for us, then, to conceive the source of Nature as a Personal God. We might content ourselves with Nature, and we might regard causes as relations between the things in Nature and not between the whole world-order and something beyond it and distinct from it. Those poetical fancies of Berkeley summon up the shades of ancient naturalism. We may be sure Hume saw them as he read.

Berkeley was no more successful in laying the ghosts of the Cartesian scepticism, though it was his confident boast that he had done so. He had commenced, indeed, with the ideas of the Academics and Cartesians but he soon found his own distinctive solution of their problems. He even paid a visit of homage, when travelling on the Continent, to the famous philosopher-priest, Father Malebranche, to whom he owed much—yet he made it clear to all who read his books that his own philosophy was radically different from the thought of that prominent Cartesian. He seemed to find scepticism lurking in the views of Malebranche,

just as Arnauld of Port Royal did when he publicly disputed their strict orthodoxy. Malebranche was suspect as well as celebrated. We know enough of Hume to surmise that he would study for himself the writings of this dubious priest of the Oratoire. We find, moreover, that he actually discusses Malebranche, and points out a lesson in religious scepticism to be learned from him, in the section of his *Treatise* entitled *Of the Modern Philosophy.*

If we may judge from those scanty notes we have quoted, Hume was engrossed with two distinct phases of Cartesian thought, one the ontological argument for the existence of God, the other the "philosophy of the brain," that is, the dependence of the mind of man upon his body. Precisely these things Malebranche himself had emphasised, in his *Recherche de la Vérité.* He had begun life as a priest. Through the performance of his spiritual functions he learned, doubtless, much of the subtlety of human nature and the devices of the heart that lead men away from truth and righteousness. He seems early to have gleaned the idea from Augustine that insight in man depends upon the will, and that the will is nothing but the act of attention, and that attention itself is determined by the feelings and native interests of man, whether they be in him by nature or by grace. Thus to enjoy the revelation of God we must really know ourselves. We must become aware of the nature of our fundamental inclinations and passions, since we cannot lift our eyes to the Perfect Being unless we convert these primary directive agencies of our life to aids of our spirit in its search for truth. To this conviction the thought of Plato gave affirmative vision. The impulses of mankind are naturally good in so far as they are harmonious workings of the soul. They are portions of one great life-long Love which is leading us on, in divers ways, to the consummate intellectual union with the eternal Good. Such were, for a time, the bright fancies of Father Malebranche. Then one day he read a book of

the new philosophy, Descartes' *Traité de l'Homme*.[26] He became acquainted with the mechanical explanation of the impulses and feelings of man: the body of man is a machine acting and reacting in a universe of matter in space and time and motion. From that day forth Malebranche was a Cartesian. His own philosophy developed under the profound influence of both Descartes and Plato. It was a brilliant union of the interests of science and religion.

We may cite what Hume himself quoted, in later years, as a thought typical of Malebranche: "One ought not so much to call God a spirit, in order to express positively what He is, as in order to signify that he is not matter. He is a Being infinitely perfect: of this we cannot doubt. But in the same manner as we ought not to imagine, even supposing him corporeal, that he is clothed with a human body, as the anthropomorphites asserted, under colour that that figure was the most perfect of any; so neither ought we to imagine, that the Spirit of God has human ideas, or bears any resemblance to our spirit; under colour that we know nothing more perfect than a human mind. We ought rather to believe, that as he comprehends the perfections of matter without being material . . . he comprehends also the perfections of created spirits, without being spirit, in the manner we conceive spirit: that his true name is *He That is*, or, in other words, Being without restriction, All Being, the Being infinite and universal."[27]

It seemed to Malebranche the very finest and most exalted kind of testimony to the existence of a God that we should have in our consciousness an idea of the Infinite. We are not simply possessed *of this idea*, but *by* it. It is not one among many other thoughts—it is a conception with reference to which all our other thoughts are compared and distinguished. We think the Infinite before the finite. From the bare fact of thinking of any Being at all

[26] Cf. V. Delbos, *La Philosophie Française*, 3rd ed., Plon-Nourrit, Paris, 1919, p. 98.
[27] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 390-1.

we must recognise the reality of this Infinite Being. For to define any particular being or existence to ourselves we are obliged to withdraw something from our general conception of Being, to limit it in some way. We can perceive nothing, therefore, without the implicit idea of the Infinite. Though some philosophers suggest that our notion of the Infinite might be derived by a composition of all finite things, we must acknowledge, on the contrary, that we can think about particular things themselves only as participations in the universal Being, just as we confess, in religious life, that God does not derive His existence from the world of creatures but all the creatures of nature participate imperfectly in His divinity.[28]

Thus God is very real. The idea of the Infinite is, moreover, the idea of a *necessary being*. For it is obvious that Being, not any particular existence, but Being in general, exists entirely in its own right, dependent upon nothing else but itself, and never possibly non-existent. Of course definite bodies can come into being and pass out of it. They are dependent things. They participate in the very real just so long as they endure or exist. But the Being not thus made definite, limited, or particular is itself necessary. It is independent. All that is hails from its very perfect reality. And we cannot conceive existence at all without this necessity of the Infinite.[29]

It follows that when we conceive the Infinite Being of God we ought not represent it to ourselves in terms of anything finite. Even the mind of man, in which this perfection is discovered, is not adequate as a pattern for our conception. We may employ it by way of metaphor. We need, somehow, to render God present to us. Thus we make Him incarnate; we make Him human in character. But this natural help to our feeble minds is fraught with danger. We too readily endow God with the whole nature of man and from that we pass easily to identifying God with all that is

[28] *Oeuvres*, Vol. III, *Recherche*, Book III, chap. VI, p. 402.
[29] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, Book IV, chap. XI, pp. 94-5.

in our limited view, forgetting that our true idea of Him is one of the wholly perfect,—otherwise God becomes simply Nature and all that we worship then disappears. Malebranche deems all anthropomorphism in religion, the position that God is a personal being, to be only a first step towards the naturalism which dispenses entirely with God.[30]

There is sound reason, apart from the untoward naturalistic consequences, for such a condemnation of the Stoic view of God. Malebranche is no despiser of man; he is not in the grip of an unexamined prejudice against the flesh. It is quite the contrary. He has learned the precise value of the human equipment for life. The mind of man is good for the preservation of man's body in the shock of material existence. It is relative to our needful activities among physical objects. Hence we know matter perfectly, in such science as Descartes proclaims, but we know nothing beyond the material planet moving in time and space, upon which we dwell. Eternity is beyond our ken. And God the transcendent perfection whom we worship in the ceremonies of religion we ought not dare to conceive except by radical contrast with these known values of our personal life. God is neither Intellect nor Will, not because these human excellences are worthless, but because their worth is so definitely fixed. Having value for human purposes they are, just on that account, not invaluable. The Infinite Being, of which we are dimly aware every moment of life, we must conceive as something above all conditions and above all the best we know in this world, and at the same time as that which bestows whatever real existence and goodness there is in our life. Here speaks one who has sat at the feet of Plato. Malebranche is no mediaeval ascetic, but a Greek, in spirit.

Nor is this all theory. Malebranche offers empirical evidence for his conception of mind as an instrument whose work it is to save the body of man. Both pleasure and pain

[30] *Ibid.*, *Entretiens Métaphysiques*, Vol. I, pp. 184-5, 189, 204-5, 339.

are natural signs of something good or bad for the organism. They are symbols whose meaning we never dispute—we simply act at once, moving toward what is indicated as the good, and away from the evil. If we speak religiously about the matter, we may say that God spares us a total preoccupation with events that have to do with living in order that we shall be free to seek for Him and be ready to receive His divine Good. Pleasure and pain are dignified as part of Providence.[31]

The information from our various senses has a like function in our life. Although we are continually obliged to struggle against our senses in this life, we ought not to conclude from this their absolute corruption or waywardness. They acquit themselves nobly of their proper task. They call our attention to what we ought to do or not do in order to preserve our life. They put us in touch with matter in such a way that we get along in the world. It is never our sensations that are at fault but our judgments made upon them. These inferences are the work of our free will. And it is by his capacity of freedom that man falls into sin, or acts to redeem himself from it. Thus if we bear in mind that our sense perceptions reveal only the things as they are related to the present situation of our own body and not the things as they are absolutely in themselves we escape all errors. We know through them the true posture of things with regard to our physical existence at any one time and place.

In support of this pragmatic view Malebranche seems to have observed and studied living things very carefully, with the attitude of a genuine scientist. He examines the facts of vision. Our eyes deceive us quite generally in everything they present to us, in the size of bodies, their shape, movement, shading, coloring, indeed in all visible qualities. These things are not what they appear to be. And all the world is deceived about them.[32] Our vision does

[31] *Recherche*, Vol. III, Book I, chap. v, p. 36.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-2.

not represent the extension of matter to us as it really is in itself. It gives us solely a perspective peculiar to us at that moment and in that place. This kind of vision is necessary for our action in moving about among things. But it means that we are blind to the nature of things in themselves. Some realities will escape our notice because they have no considerable bearing on our life. The tiny maggot which the microscope discovers to us is not capable of injuring or aiding us in our way through life—we find it hidden from sight. But if we had eyes like microscopes or if we were as diminutive as mites or worms, we should judge quite differently about the size and even the very presence of such tiny bodies. Without doubt, too, these creatures themselves have eyes disposed to see what is important in their environment and necessary to their preservation. The structure of their eyes would be different from ours in order to be affected by a different kind of object. Thus it appears that our visual organs are limited to our specific kind of life. Perception is subservient to our vital needs and not to our speculative ambitions to know the truth.[33]

Even the operations of our human understanding are good, primarily, for practical matters alone. We pass judgments naturally upon the things disclosed to us by our senses. These inferences are something like composite sensations. They amplify the sense data. And besides these interpretations we make assumptions such as this, that the external world exists precisely as we perceive it and that things conjoined with each other in our perception are actually cause and effect in reality. These are pre-judgments or prejudices. And all mankind is constantly given to making these rash judgments. The error is natural, but it is also valuable for our action in dealing with the things of our world. "Natural judgment" is useful for the preservation of our physical existence. So long as we recognise this function we may follow Nature in ourselves without compunction. As philosophers, however, we are to be-

[33] *Recherche*, Vol. III, Book I, chap. VI, pp. 47-8; Book III, chap. IX, p. 433.

ware of seeking truth through such activities of the human mind.[34] Above all we must refrain from attributing to God, the Infinite, any such intelligence as our own which is entirely relative to our finite place in the order of things.

These views of the limitations of our mental endowment must have impressed Hume very deeply. They became, indeed, his own rooted conviction. We find him defending them vigorously to Francis Hutcheson whom he consulted about the manuscript of the third volume of his *Treatise*: "I wish from my heart I could avoid concluding, that since morality, according to your opinion, as well as mine, is determined merely by sentiment, it regards only human nature and human life. This has been often urged against you, and the consequences are very momentous. . . . What experience have we with regard to superior beings? How can we ascribe to them any sentiments at all? They have implanted those sentiments in us for the conduct of life like our bodily sensations, which they possess not themselves. I expect no answer to these difficulties in the compass of a letter."[35] Nor could Hume discover any answer in later years. He remained ever conscious of the imperfections of the human mind.

Malebranche actually taught Hume a religious scepticism. On all those points with regard to which Berkeley felt he could assume we have certain knowledge, Malebranche raises questions absolutely fatal to the argument. Berkeley followed Descartes in commencing with a *Cogito ergo Sum*: we know ourselves really as we are, in consciousness. The fact of this could not even be doubted without implying it. But Malebranche inquires what this consciousness or mind actually means, as we do know it. Is it anything more than feeling or sentiment or sense of our own being? We have a like sensible awareness of objects in our world. We know, moreover, that our perceptual knowledge of objects is quite relative to our existence

[34] *Ibid.*, Book I, chap. VI, p. 50; chap. XIV, p. 116.
[35] Burton, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 119-20; Hume, *Essays*, Vol. I, p. 32.

among those objects. It is only in the abstract sciences of mathematics and mechanics that we truly know matter. But we cannot achieve a like science of our own spiritual being. The idea of matter is clear and revealing. That of spirit is comparatively vague, merely a feeling or sentiment. This immediate consciousness appears, then, like our sense perception, to be only relative to our contacts with the physical objects of our world. It can hardly be more than the very least part of our whole spiritual nature. We may say, therefore, that we know nothing more present and intimate and distinct than our own being, but we must admit that we have no perfect knowledge of our true selves. In a sense there is nothing we know better than the soul of man; in another sense there is nothing of which we know less.[36] "Know thyself" is still the philosopher's quest.

Malebranche raises a doubt, too, about our knowledge of causation. Berkeley believed that we have absolute evidence of our own personal agency in the calling up of ideas or the initiation of action. The will of man is free to act. We know intimately in ourselves what it means to produce or cause something to exist. Malebranche observes, in this supposedly personal revelation of "power," "action," or "causation," only the fact of a conjunction between two things in an event. Just as we perceive merely the sequence of motions in the meeting of two billiard balls and not the necessity that makes them move, so we simply witness the consequent movement of our limbs or the appearance of some idea upon our intention to act or think. We suppose a causality between such elements. But this active power is not at all what Berkeley pretended: it is not intuitively known. What causation really is, therefore, we have still to learn.[37] And to this keen criticism the youthful Hume assented. We find him using the very illustrations, and even the characteristic expressions of Malebranche, when he discusses the problem of causation in the *Treatise*.

[36] Malebranche, *Recherche*, Vol. III, Book III, chap. VII, pp. 413-4.
[37] *Ibid.*, Book III, chap. III, pp. 386-7; chap. VI, p. 404.

We must not suppose, however, that Hume followed Malebranche as a disciple. He gleaned the critical thoughts, particularly those bearing upon Berkeley's argument. When Malebranche has made his point that we perceive cause or power nowhere in nature or mind itself, he lifts us from the despair of scepticism by proclaiming that Cause, Power, and Freedom reside in the incomprehensible and infinite God. The seeming initiatives of our personal lives are but the occasions upon which God manifests his will through us. All the activities of nature appearing so necessary in our eyes are likewise only junctures of events wherein God is alone moving nature to his bidding. These spiritual conclusions Hume fought shy of and criticised effectively. In so far as he felt any convictions upon the reality and nature of the divine, he preferred the less abstract and more personal interpretation of Berkeley, and even of the ancient Stoics.

At this point we can attempt only an imaginary portrait. We are to see, if possible, how Hume naturally came to ask the significant question, *Why a Cause is Always Necessary?* Hume did not sit down among his books, one day when his mind was clearer than usual, and deliberately ferret out this doubt that was to prove so embarrassing to philosophers. Such important insights dawn upon men while they are intent upon very concrete problems. It is hard to believe that many truths originate from the mere pleasure of raising questions or disputing. As Bacon declared, the way to truth is not the way of doubting for its own sake. There must be some point to our questioning. Something must be at stake.

Hume was wrestling earnestly, as he tells us himself, with the arguments to confirm, in his own mind, the "common opinion" of the existence of a personal God. He recognised Stoic theism in the beliefs of Berkeley. He was acquainted, through Cicero's discussion, with a quite opposite conception, naturalism. Still, Berkeley laid claim to a

decisive demonstration. And his was an intelligible position, well wrought out and expressed. But Hume detected in it several assumptions. It proved a personal God from the fact of a world-order known not to be the effect of our own thinking. Since we individually are not the cause of Nature, something else must, of necessity, be that cause, for it is contradictory to suppose that anything could exist or begin to exist without a Cause. We *must* infer a Cause of Nature. Now our inference must also be based upon knowledge. We know ourselves as genuine agencies causing what we think or do and we know true causation only in such activities of Mind. Hence we must conclude that the cause of Nature is a Mind like our own. Yet there was Berkeley himself doubting whether men of science could ever demonstrate anything by their usual maxims of reasoning since it is possible to suspect Nature of not being uniform. There was also the poet in him vaunting the inimitable wonder of Nature—she scarcely lends herself to comparison with any works of the human creature. These shadows of doubt darkened when even a priest spoke boldly against such dogmas. It is not certain that we do know ourselves absolutely as we really are and causation in our own mental or spiritual processes. Man is not the appropriate measure of the Universe. God is not fittingly conceived in the image of Mind. The thought of Malebranche made Hume himself feel bold enough to dispute these points. And he was strengthened in that independence by the many sceptics of history, who talked as if this subject of the ultimate source of Nature were a long persistent problem which no philosophy ever solves. He met Berkeley's dogmatism, therefore, with one decisive question: *Why* is it necessary to infer a Cause for Nature?

The Whole *must* have a Cause! Why? Because we are compelled by logical necessity to conceive a distinct cause for every event. Now in logic the necessity of anything is shown from the fact that any other thing we might suppose turns out, upon examination, to contradict itself. The

impossibility of any alternative spells the necessity of that which is true. To argue, therefore, that Nature demands a Cause means that we cannot conceive the possibility of Nature's coming into being and going on in any other way. But we can conceive precisely such an alternative. The ancient philosophers thought of it without feeling anything unnatural or impossible. Cicero records the point of view as a genuine competitor with the hypothesis of theism. And it is a complete view of the world, not a casual fancy that will not bear any examination. It is that coherent thought of Strato the Peripatetic. Matter may have internal capacities of organisation blindly working themselves out in the course of time, as we may witness in living growth, decay, death and birth,—always some order coming out of what was before, yet remaining still, the order of Nature. We conceive this hypothesis without finding that it contradicts itself. True, we cannot describe all the details of this Nature conceived to be sufficient unto itself and needing no prior source of life or being in order to exist. This difficulty attaches equally to those who believe in Providence, for they too cannot prove, in every incident, what is the divine intention of God. Naturalism is thus a thoroughly possible view. It is one instance, then, of a situation where the mind of man does not *need* to conclude the existence of a cause distinct from the existence it contemplates. This case illustrates the general possibility of interpreting things without the maxim of cause and effect. A single instance to the contrary destroys all pretence of a demonstration. So we are left in doubt. We do not really know why it *is* necessary to ascribe a cause to every occurrence in the world.

In all the affairs of life, indeed, and even in the pursuit of knowledge we would never think of asking why a cause is necessary. We take it for granted that we may infer causes and effects. We find it valuable to do so. All our knowledge of nature consists of such inferences made in

the course of human experience. Our question would be quite without point in those cases. It would even stand in the way of our discovering new things. But the case of the Universe as a whole is very different and, indeed, absolutely unique. To think its cause we must advance beyond all nature as we know it, including ourselves whom we are supposed to know best of all, and we must conceive a Being beside whom there is no other (so that we are forbidden to think of its Cause) and who is the source and impulse of all life and being, in ourselves and in objects. We are to strain at this conception, and for what purpose? To satisfy, apparently, our logical mind. For when we only define that Cause in terms of the effect which we know, we learn nothing new. Such a step of thought is quite useless for knowledge. Above all, it makes no difference in our conduct. Nature is supposed to be orderly just the same. It is only logic, apparently, that demands this inference. And if we attend to the logic of the situation, we find it only a dream. The logical necessity is not there, but only a habit of inferring causes in daily life and in science, and that necessity is one we do not understand.

Some philosophers thought they had an insight into the necessity of a cause for every event. Hume noticed several pretended demonstrations for the maxim. Hobbes argued that all spaces and times are indifferent in themselves, so that a cause is necessary to determine any particular object to its specific time and place. The object cannot begin to be, for lack of this precise determination of its beginning.[38] Well, Hume thinks, it is quite easy to suppose the time and space to be determinate without supposing a cause for the order of space and time. The real question is why we find it necessary to attribute a cause to order of any kind, whether of objects or of times and spaces. Hobbes begs the very question in his proof. Samuel Clarke does the same: Everything must have a cause for the reason that, if it

[38] *Works*, Molesworth, London, 1840, Vol. IV, *Of Liberty and Necessity, Sixth Point*, p. 276, and *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. XII, par. 3.

lacked one, it would produce itself and thus exist before it really existed.[39] Hume sees again the assumption of the very point in question: If any thing exists without a cause, then we are not compelled to think it its own cause, for it may simply be the fact that this thing does exist in and by itself. Then Locke varies Clarke's argument by saying that whatever is produced without any cause is produced by nothing, which cannot be, because nothing cannot produce something.[40] Such arguments are all "fallacious and sophistical." Hume begs the reasoner honestly to exclude a cause from his thought altogether when he is trying to reason from such exclusion to its necessity, and not to introduce the thing itself or nothing as the cause, when we are trying to conceive the situation without any cause. What these attempts at demonstration really do prove is that the human mind is bent upon having causes. There is no question of this fact. But the most interesting point in the whole affair is the general character of such human thinking. Hume has discovered that the principle we employ so universally for the attainment of knowledge has no justification before reason itself.

Our portrayal of Hume's thinking passes very naturally from what is imaginary to what is matter of actual record. These latter criticisms of Hobbes, Clarke, and Locke, and the proposal of a fundamental doubt concerning the logic-

[39] *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, London, 1704, Proposition 1, and *A Collection of Papers which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibnitz and Dr. Clarke in the years* 1715-6, *relating to the Principles of Natural Philosophy and Religion, with an Appendix*, London, 1717, Clarke's Second Letter, sec. 1. In this connection it is worthy of note that Hume must have read Leibnitz's Second Letter (to which Clarke was making answer) wherein it was asserted definitely that the dynamic principle of "force" and "causation" cannot be identified with the principle of logical contradiction. The *Appendix* contained also Leibnitz's view, from the *Theodicée*, of an active faculty inherent in all substance from creation. If Hume studied the *Theodicée* on his own account, he also read Leibnitz's interesting criticism of Hobbes' essay on *Liberty and Necessity*—that events have no necessary cause, for the contrary could always come to pass without contradiction. See *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Gerhardt, Vol. VI, *Essais de Theodicée, Reflexions*, sec. 5, p. 392.

[40] *Essay*, Book IV, chap. x, sec. 3.

al value of causal inference are set down in the *Treatise*.[41] The *crucial instance* of a situation where our mind could think an existence without necessarily ascribing a cause for it is not, however, in the *Treatise*. When Hume came to publish his discovery, he did not betray what we have here imagined to be its rise in a personal scepticism. In this he was probably well-advised. To offer the British public, of the middle of the eighteenth century, a new idea presupposing an honest doubt of the certainty of religious beliefs was to court the very disaster that actually befell Hume's philosophy, despite all his caution.

Moreover, Hume would have had to come to some intellectual decision himself concerning the issue of naturalism and theism, if he were to introduce the subject at all—for he was not the person to dodge a problem. But he was not at that time ready to say anything on this topic. Indeed, he was only twenty years old, he tells Sir Gilbert Elliot, when he attained his vision of the new order of philosophy, while debating with himself the *pros* and *cons* of this issue. Just how he dated that enlightening event in his biography we can merely surmise: Berkeley's *Alciphron* came out in the early spring of the year 1732, just *before* Hume's twenty-first birthday. It gave him new matter to consider. For Berkeley was no longer the dogmatic youth but a mature philosopher. He had abated his grand pretensions to *logical* proof for his religious beliefs. He resorted more to the art of persuasion. By artistic appeal he would convince men of the truths of a personal, spiritual order. The presence of God was to be gleaned from the concrete life of mankind both in nature and in society. Berkeley had become more "empirical." He was attempting to delineate the meaning of God in human experience. And realising this, Hume was unwilling to offer a judgment on the matter, or even to suggest his own doubts, or the plausibility of an alternative naturalism, without more deliberation upon the meaning of the theism which Berkeley had just repre-

[41] Vol. I, Book I, Part III, sec. 3, pp. 380 *ff.*

sented. We shall find that his *Dialogues* honor Berkeley as a "*philosophical* dogmatist."[42] This persistent deference is testimony to the profound effect Berkeley's later writing must have had upon Hume at this juncture of his life. It kept him from publishing his own reflections upon the earlier arguments of Berkeley. It made him withhold from print the criticisms that seem to have occupied his attention and engendered such a radical doubt. Not until he wrote the *Enquiry* did he say that Berkeley furnished the best possible lessons in scepticism.[43] In that same *Enquiry*, moreover, he ventured, for the first time, to introduce some of his religious discussions, particularly that one entitled *Of a Particular Providence and a Future State.* These were, even then, mere tentatives in the formulation of his thought.

It is quite understandable, therefore, that Hume would not set forth, at so youthful a period, those preliminary inquiries which seem to have opened the way to that "new scene of thought." It is to be expected, moreover, that he would throw himself, "with an ardour natural to young men," into the exploration of the new view that was then before him. He had discovered, in one special field of knowledge, that mankind presumed greatly in its use of the maxim of cause and effect and he suspected more such presumptions. Here was something definitely new to bring to the attention of the world. And he had some hopes of fame, too, for he was treating of a subject wholly acceptable to the eighteenth century, the Nature of Man. Thus Hume devoted himself, at the risk of all else, to his *Treatise of Human Nature.*

NOTE

Kant's Approach to the Scepticism of Hume

When Kant wrote his *Prolegomena* he spoke of a memory or reminder of the thought of Hume as the beginning of his own critical philosophy. The word used is *Erinnerung.*

[42] See below, p. 316.

[43] *Essays,* Vol. II, p. 127 n.

Now recent studies have established quite conclusively that Kant was first acquainted with the *Enquiry* in a German translation, in the year 1762, and that he accidentally came upon the most important section in the *Treatise* through reading James Beattie's *Essay on Truth* in 1772.[44] It has been difficult to reconcile Kant's *allusion* to that earlier experience with the obvious importance to his philosophy of his later contact with Hume's discussion of *Why a Cause is Always Necessary*. It seems to make the *Enquiry* the source of his own insight into Hume's thought. Yet the whole argument of his *Critique* is strictly relevant to the point made in that section of the *Treatise*. It is a very nice problem to interpret Kant's meaning. And it seems, in the end, to throw light upon the progress of Hume's thought as we have been tracing it.

When Kant completed his *Dissertation*, in 1770, he had disclosed the limitations of our knowledge through the subjective forms of space and time, but he still expected, in the spirit of a rationalist, that by discounting the modifications due to these known forms of sense he might advance to a genuine knowledge of ultimate reality through the unattainted principles of reason.[45] From the year 1772, however, he dates his further enlightenment. In the course of that year he suddenly found his task made more difficult and complicated. He learned that the very principles of reason themselves were subjective, that is, peculiar to human beings, needing correction and discounting before we might ever hope to win true knowledge through them. Earlier he had rested secure in the competency of human intellect in mathematics and natural science; now he perceived that all the sciences alike suffered from some deficiency in the principles of reason. They were relative in character. They were all alike uncertain. And whereas he had been formerly seeking to establish certainties about

[44] See N. K. Smith, *Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Macmillan, 1918, p. xxviii.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

God, Freedom, and Immortality, the objects of Christian belief, he was now bound to prove by painful labor the very possibility of any kind of mundane knowledge. Something had struck to the heart of the old metaphysic. Something had shaken his confidence in our intellectual achievement. This is the change that came about during that year 1772.

Kant undertook, then, to inquire into the "sources, conditions, scope, and limits of our knowledge"[46] where reason was at once the object and the means of his research. To solve his problem he set up a new "Copernican hypothesis." It was a novel view of the relation of reason to reality. Instead of assuming, as the modern philosophers had done, that our knowledge conforms to things as they really are, he proposed to regard what we actually know as conformable to our mode of knowing it. He deliberately faced the fact that our knowledge is thereby cut off from absolute reality. But he gained an immense advantage by the hypothesis. He was able to describe the actual attainments of knowledge in regard to matters of fact in this apparent world. Our human experience is but a world of appearance. The fact of such experience no sceptic, not even Hume, had attempted to deny. Experience can be characterised as a succession of events in nature, or if we please, of ideas in our perception. To know anything, then, is to be aware of time as a reality. With that as a datum, Kant proceeded to analyse what is necessary, from the point of view of our actual habits of thought, if we are to have these appearances in time. He found that to think time we need the conception of something permanent in space with which the succession contrasts and by which it becomes apparent, and, at the same time, the conception of a continuous subject present with the succession and knowing it as such. Thus we need to be aware of objects and of ourselves in order to recognise the fact of time. But further, things happening in time are endowed with signifi-

[46] N. K. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

cance. To be conscious of anything, therefore, we must be aware of some meaning to it, as well as of objects and ourselves in time. Meaning is neither subjective nor objective exclusively; whatever happens in time signifies to us something that is going on among objects. Further still, there are types of such significance, all of them involved more or less implicitly in our understanding of any event. Certain general relationships and determinate connections underly all knowledge of facts. These indispensable things are *a priori* concepts. They are necessary if experience at all is to be for us. Experience presents itself under the forms of these logical categories as well as those of space and time. We conceive all appearances to happen in schematic arrangements of substance and attribute, cause and effect, and reciprocal relations. And it is precisely because these principles are necessary to the first possession of experience that they are valid for all explicit use of them in the elaborations of experience through natural science and philosophy. Thus the maxim of causality is proved a rational principle for the investigation of Nature. This is Kant's answer to Hume. The argument he called a "transcendental deduction," to distinguish it from a deduction by sheer logic, that is, by the law of contradiction, which Hume had shown, once and for all, to be impossible.

We need not pass in review Kant's further procedure. He had to confront the severance he made between the mind and ultimate reality. Particularly acute was his problem of showing ground for any knowledge whatsoever of realities beyond Nature, or of the divine truths. He took his stand on the fact that man, despite his merely relative knowledge, knows that it is relative. We can think unconditioned reality. Such a reality we may not venture to define intellectually, but we have certain experiences in the moral life that compel us to attribute a definitely spiritual character to that ideal. Kant even made so bold as to declare that he deliberately set a limit to knowledge in order

to make room for faith. But these ideas carry us beyond the reach of Hume's influence.

It is clear that the transcendental proof of the validity of such principles as cause and effect is inspired by Hume's showing-up of the pretended "metaphysical" proofs derived from the law of logical contradiction. For Beattie had transcribed Hume's discussion from the *Treatise*: "that the foregoing maxim is neither intuitively nor demonstrably certain, our author attempts to prove from this consideration, that we cannot demonstrate the impossibility of the contrary. Nay, the contrary, he says, is not inconceivable: 'for we can conceive an object non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without joining it to the idea of a cause, which is an idea altogether distinct and different.' But this, I [Beattie] presume, is not a fair state of the case. Can we conceive a thing beginning to exist, and yet bring ourselves to think that a cause is not necessary to the production of such a thing? If we cannot (I am sure I cannot), then is the contrary of this maxim, when fairly stated, found to be truly and properly inconceivable."[47] For his part, Beattie believed the maxim to be a self-evident truth. Hence he opposed all demonstrations for it, as well as Hume's proof against it. To prove a thing already evident is to spoil a good state of affairs. Beattie quoted then, with complacent approval, Hume's disclosure of the *petitio principii* in the reasonings of Hobbes, Clarke, and Locke. With an animus against science, like Berkeley, he took pleasure in copying off Hume's questioning of the uniformity of nature: "In all our reasonings from the cause to the effect, we proceed on a supposition, and a belief, that the course of nature will continue to be in time to come what we experience it to be at present, and remember it to have been in time past. This presumption of continuance is the foundation of all our judgments concerning future events; and this, in many cases, determines our

[47] *Essay on Truth*, 5th ed., London, 1774, Part I, chap. II, sec. 5, pp. 107-8.

conviction as effectually as any proof or demonstration whatsoever, although the conviction arising from it be different in kind from what is produced by strict demonstration, as well as from those kinds of conviction that attend the evidence of sense, memory and abstract intuition." Thus causal inference is "by no means a logical deduction of a conclusion from premises."[48] Beattie agreed with Hume in this because he held to the position that such suppositions as that of the uniformity of nature were necessary and evident principles of common sense, incapable of proof or disproof. But through these transcriptions of the thought of Hume he roused Kant to the task of his *Critique*. Such principles are neither self-evident nor demonstrable by logic. They *must* be proved by some new logic, by a transcendental argument.

The services of Beattie are not yet fully realised, if we think only of these quotations from the *Treatise*. It was not merely in giving a contact with them but in providing a significant *setting* for them that he helped Kant to know Hume. He connected this questioning of causation directly with Hume's discussion of natural religion in the *Enquiry*, and referred it to the *Essay* dealing with *A Particular Providence and a Future State*: "The axiom now before us (of cause and effect) is the foundation of the most important argument that ever employed human reason: I mean that which, from the works that are created, evinces the eternal power and godhead of the Creator. That argument, as far as it resolves itself into this axiom, is properly a demonstration, being a clear deduction from a self-evident principle (that every event must have a cause); and therefore no man can pretend to understand it without feeling it to be conclusive. So that what the Psalmist says of the atheist is literally true, *He is a Fool*; as really irrational as if he refused to be convinced by a mathematical demonstration. Nay, he is more irrational. . . . That the whole sensible universe hath to us the appearance of an

[48] *Essay on Truth*, Part I, chap. II, sec. 6, pp. 120, 122.

effect, of something which once was not, and which exists not by any necessity of nature, but by the arbitrary appointment of some powerful and intelligent cause, different from and independent on it;—that the universe, I say, has this appearance, cannot be denied; and that it is what it appears to be, an effect. . . . And if so, we offer violence to our understanding, when we attempt to believe that the whole universe does not proceed from some cause; and we argue unphilosophically and irrationally, when we endeavour to disprove this natural and universal suggestion of the human mind.

"It is true, the universe is, as one may say, a work *sui generis*, altogether singular, and such as we cannot properly compare to other works; because indeed all works are comprehended in it. But that natural dictate of the mind by which we believe the universe to have proceeded from a cause, arises from our considering it as an effect; a circumstance in which it is perfectly similar to all works whatsoever. The singularity of the effect rather confirms (if that be possible) than weakens our belief of the necessity of the cause; at least it makes us more attentive to the cause and interests us more deeply in it. What is the universe but a vast system of works or effects, some of them great, and others small; some more and some less considerable? If each of these works, the least as well as the greatest, require a cause for its production; is it not in the highest degree absurd and unnatural to say, that the whole is not the effect of a cause?—Each link of a great chain must be supported by something, but the whole chain may be supported by nothing. . . . Are not these assertions too absurd to deserve an answer?

"The reader, if he has the misfortune to be acquainted with Mr. Hume's *Essay on a particular providence and a future state*, will see, that these remarks are intended as an answer to a very strange argument there advanced against the belief of a Deity. 'The universe,' we are told, 'is an object quite singular and unparalleled; no other ob-

ject that has fallen under our observation bears any similarity to it; neither it nor its cause can be comprehended under any known species; and therefore concerning the cause of the universe we can form no rational conclusion at all.'—I appeal to any man of sound judgement, whether that suggestion of his understanding, which prompts him to infer a cause from an effect, has any dependence upon a prior operation of his mind, by which the effect in question is referred to its genus or species. . . . Would he not acknowledge a cause to be as necessary for the production of the most uncommon, as of the most familiar object?"[49]

When Kant recalled that discussion in the *Enquiry* which he had read himself as far back as 1762, he could not refrain from anger at the stupidity of those critics of Hume who were wielding their bludgeon of common sense upon a most acute critical genius.[50] Such men as Beattie were always proving things Hume never disputed, and assuming the very point he was bringing into question. The question was not that of the felt necessity of a cause for things, be they common or uncommon, but that of the *character* of the necessity we all feel. It seemed to be non-rational. And this was especially evident in the particular case we have been considering, namely, the Universe as a Whole, treated as an event in time and space. Such an extraordinary instance might well make us "more attentive" to it. It would open our eyes to the sheer presumption of all our reasoning in terms of cause and effect. And seeing this concrete illustration of Hume's meaning as well as the abstract discussion of the necessity of a cause in general, Kant caught "the spark of light" from Hume and commenced work upon his own philosophy.[51]

Thus Beattie reminded Kant of hints he had noticed in reading the *Enquiry* ten years before but which he did not appreciate until he saw the religious discussions of Hume

[49] *Op. cit.*, pp. 112-6.
[50] *Prolegomena*, A 10-11.
[51] *Ibid.*, A 11-13.

in close juxtaposition with the questioning of the causal maxim. Beattie was poetically gifted. He divined, it seems, the course of Hume's own thinking. And when Kant travelled over this way as we have imagined it, he understood for the first time the meaning of that sceptical philosophy.

CHAPTER THREE

The Imagination

THE effect upon Hume of discovering the element of presumption in every inference from some present thing to its cause, or vice versa, was not to throw him into a despair of all knowledge but to stimulate him to a study of such inferences throughout the whole range of the human understanding. For he had a glimpse of a new scene of thought. As he expressed himself in the *Enquiry*: "If the mind be not engaged by argument to make this step [inference], it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and authority; and that principle will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same. What that principle is, may well be worth the pains of enquiry."[1]

Something as important as reason itself seems to emerge. At first Hume singled out "custom," meaning by the term the source of our tendency to renew the same operation again and again without our being determined to do so by reason. This was a "universally acknowledged" foundation of most convictions on matters social, political, moral, and religious. Thinkers in the eighteenth century were familiar with the large element of convention in the prevailing beliefs of mankind. The diversity of codes in various countries and ages suggested, inevitably, that the special views of any period or locality depend upon many purely accidental features of the situation. Hume was now likening all our judgments of matter of fact to such customary beliefs. He saw no basis for any distinction between the conventions of practical life and the habits of scientific thought. Reasoning is not purely rational. And it is not only in religion and politics that we believe according to the special contacts of our experience but also

[1] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 36.

in our science. Yet in thus assimilating the activities of our human understanding with each other as expressions of custom Hume had no intention of representing them as "arbitrary." Indeed, they are "a species of natural instincts" like the passions and impulses of man. No reasoning on our part can either produce or prevent their taking place under the conditions appropriate to them. Thus "custom" is only a term by which we may indicate what is *not* rational— it *explains* nothing whatsoever about such mental operations. Hume resorted to it, however, because the modern tradition invested it with a certain dignity not incomparable with the quality of respect accorded to pure reason. Ever since the time of Montaigne the tracing of anything to custom as distinct from reason was to go "back to nature," an authority of equal influence with reason. Hume hoped, then, that the ordinary literate person would understand his question about the causal maxim, through familiarity with an alternative to "reason," in the form of "custom" or "nature."

But to real thinkers, or persons of speculative habits of mind, he offered a deeper principle. All acts of the mind with its own ideas, that are not logical operations of reason, must be activities of imagination. What such inferences from cause to effect or effect to cause reveal is that our imagination, though seeming to be free to combine, take apart, and produce ideas in any order at all, is actually determined by our very human nature to operate in certain regular ways. Man has a "natural" imagination. He has it because he needs it in his physical activities among things of the world. There is, then, a rationale of some sort in our imagination. This is Hume's constructive idea. He called it his "Solution" of his "Sceptical Doubts."[2]

[2] See *Enquiry*, sec. 5. Part I alone is for the ordinary reader who is warned, if he cannot stomach speculative inquiry, to pass by Part II. It is interesting to observe James Beattie's reaction to this. He maliciously revised the title to *A Doubtful Solution of Doubtful Doubts*, playing on the words *Sceptical Solution*, which really meant the solution advanced by the traditional school of Academic Scepticism.—*Essay on Truth*, Part III, chap. II, p. 443 and note.

Hume was helped to this solution by those very writers who had given him such excellent lessons in scepticism. He must have caught a glimpse of it even while he was attaining to his insight relating to the maxim of causation. For he immediately prosecuted his studies in "most of the celebrated writings in Latin, French and English," where he found a very considerable literature suggesting that ideas in the mind of man had connections with each other quite different from those we call "rational" or "logical."

Montaigne often spoke of custom as a "second nature." It is, also, a way of imagining things. Men absorb such ways and practices other than by taking thought—they drink them in with their mother's milk at the commencement of their lives, and from that time forth they envisage their universe in certain particular aspects that seem to them native, and not wise acquired. They hold to beliefs or complex ideas which are really "common imaginations." They regard them, nevertheless, as "general and natural" truths. Whatever is contrary to these imaginings seems to be utterly contrary to reason itself. Yet they never think of testing these "common impressions" by the exercise of their reason. They are impelled to conceive them by a "natural judgment" which is far from being clear and distinct but yet affords working conclusions for life. Thus it happens that although men all have different habits of life formed appropriately to their diverse neighborhoods and ages, still they possess a certain established, general body of beliefs, common to all mankind and a testimony to their common human nature. Montaigne revived this Academic scepticism at the time of the Renaissance and made it flourish in the modern tradition.[3]

[3] *Essais, De Mesnager Sa Volonté*: "L'accoustumance est une seconde nature, et non moins puissante."; *De la Coustume*, etc.; *Apologie de Raimond Sebonde*: "Les Academiciens recevoient quelque inclination de jugement." This was "jugement naturel"; *De la Presumption*: "car les plus fermes imaginations que j'aye, et generales . . . sont naturelles et tout miennes."

Thomas Hobbes was another great figure, in whose writings Hume had already discovered a fallacious argument to prove the necessity of a cause for every event. Like Montaigne, Hobbes saw in the imagination a source of certain general beliefs of mankind. After the activity of the senses that of imagination is the most significant capacity of our human mind. It gives rise to both simple and compound thoughts. When we direct our imagination by means of words or other voluntary signs, we have that special phase of mind we call "mental discourse" or "understanding."[4]

Such discursive thinking is worth study. It is obviously a succession of thoughts, a "consequence or train of imaginations." This is "not altogether so casual as it seems to be." We cannot imagine things of which we have not had any sensations. Our imagination can move from one thing to another only along the lines traced by our senses.[5] There is, then, a certain determination in the succession of our thoughts. Sometimes there is only a "wild ranging of the mind," as when we lack companionship or work to occupy us—yet even in such free fancy we "may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependence of one thought upon another." At other times the order of our thoughts is "more constant," being regulated by some feeling or purpose in us. When we desire anything very much, or suffer from a great fear, we conceive the means of attaining our end or escaping the danger, in doing which we pass in thought from the near to the remote. We are thinking of these things, too, as causes and effects. It is common to both man and beast to seek the causes or means to produce a certain desired end. But it is a distinctive quality of the human mind to be curious enough to "seek all the possible effects" and thus to imagine a whole range of connections. This "seeking" attitude or "sagacity" stands man in good stead, for it gives him added power over his own life. It is

[4] *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. III.
[5] *Human Nature*, chap. IV, sec. 2, *ff.*

manifest even in "remembrance or calling to mind." But the inquiring spirit is even more especially shown in human "foresight," "prudence," or "wisdom." Here it is liable to mistakes, for it proceeds on the supposition that "like events will follow like actions." "But this is certain; by how much one man has more experience of things past, than another; by so much also he is more prudent, and his expectations the seldomer fail him. The *present* only has a being in Nature; things *past* have a being in the memory only, but things *to come* have no being at all; the *future* being but a fiction of the mind, applying the sequels of actions past, to the actions that are present; which with most certainty is done by him that has most experience; but not with certainty enough. And though it be called prudence, when the event answereth our expectation; yet in its own nature, it is but presumption. . . . As prudence is a *presumption* of the *future*, contracted from the *experience* of time *past*, so there is a presumption of things past taken from other things (not future but) past also."[6]

So the presumption in all causal reasoning falls into a larger class of similar operations of the human understanding. We presume with regard to the past itself from our past experience. We make bold to anticipate the future likewise from our past experience. This is characteristic of our intellectual processes. It is a remarkable phase of that forwardness of imagination which we share with the animals and which is bound up with our life of passion and action.[7] Our nature makes us seek causes and effects for the sake of living securely and well. And even in the most desultory rovings of fancy we detect some kind of

[6] *Leviathan*, chap. III; *Human Nature*, chap. IV, secs. 4-11; chap. VIII, sec. 3. Hence Locke set up a distinction between certain "knowledge" and such presuming "judgment."—*Essay*, Book IV, chap. XIV, sec. 4.

[7] Hobbes described the process of recalling very much in the manner of Aristotle, who represented it as an association by contiguity and similarity. Cf. H. C. Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology*, Scribner, New York, 1921, pp. 4, 24-8.

rationale which we cannot explain but must ascribe to Nature. These views must surely have been part of that new prospect for Hume.

Another mind had taken possession of these earlier studies in the "seeking" disposition of Man before Hume came on the scene,—namely, Father Malebranche. His own philosophy was a *Search for Truth.* What he meant by Truth was God, the Infinitely Perfect Reality. But the path of such a quest was hard. There were passions in the way. And not only passion but the best part of man, as Augustine had discovered long ago, the very intellect itself. For the thinking nature has ways of its own not directed toward a spiritual destiny. It was to Descartes, however, that Malebranche owed the convincing proof of this fact. The new physiology disclosed man as a machine placed in the mechanical order of things. To exist in the body among such realities, man must concern himself with material things: hence the human understanding is able perfectly to know matter, in its mathematical and scientific knowledge. It is plain, then, that the human mind is fitted to these actualities of Nature. But a problem arose now for this spiritual-minded student of the new learning: How will the human mind ever be able to move beyond those vital preoccupations with the physical world to a contemplation of the eternal God? To find a possible way to that salvation, Malebranche had to explore for himself the recesses of human nature, and especially those activities that made for the seeking of things.

"The Mind of Man is, as it were, by its nature situated between its Creator and corporeal creatures; nothing, according to St. Augustine, being above it but God, nor beneath it but body. But as the great elevation it obtains above all material beings is no hindrance to its uniting with them, and even to its depending, after a sort, upon a piece of matter; so, notwithstanding the infinite distance

between the sovereign Being and the human mind, the latter is immediately, and most intimately united with the former."[8]

Man is a piece of matter acting and reacting like all other bodies. This truth is obvious. But the new science of the human body discovered this fact to Malebranche in a much more profound sense. It is not merely the impulses, instincts, and behavior of mankind that tend to the preservation of the body but activities like the circulation of the blood hidden from us until such men as Harvey disclose it. The movement of our blood is a condition of those more apparent physical movements in the external world. Deeper still this science reveals that all our life depends immediately upon very subtle activities in the nervous system. Human nature is seen to be a physical nature through and through.

But man is also a Spirit intimately participating in the Grace or Love of the Perfect, Eternal God. There is a certain sense in which we know this through the very fact of our consciousness. But such consciousness of ourselves is barely more than a feeling. We ordinarily know very little of ourselves. If the spiritual aspect of man is, however, as real as the physical, we should expect to discover, by taking some pains like the scientist who studies bodies and their movements, a certain hidden activity of mind corresponding to those internal activities of our body. There is, we may surmise, a veritable "circulation" of our thoughts and desires.[9] There is an order in our mind as wonderful as the order of events in our nervous system. To the discovery of these phenomena of mind Malebranche devoted his own great psychological genius.

After showing, in Book I of the *Recherche*, that the senses are no source of truth but are really instruments

[8] *Préface* to *Recherche de la Vérité*, tr. by T. Taylor, Oxford and London, 1694.
[9] *Oeuvres*, Vol. III, *Recherche*, Book II, chap. 1, p. 154.

for the preservation of our body, Malebranche studies the Imagination. At once he makes a significant distinction between imagination as "passive," and as "active." The events in our brain are determined in space and time as all physical events are—hence that aspect of our imagination is the "passive." "Active imagination" is activity of mind. We are to think, therefore, of our human imagination as both determinate and free. This phase of our life is analogous to the moral life, where we suffer passion like any creature and yet perform acts of free spiritual virtue.[10]

Man is a union of body and mind. His thoughts correspond with certain traces in his brain, and the changes in his body and nervous system correspond in turn with movements of thought. This connection is a natural one. And when we understand the "causes" or principles of such union we gain new light upon the connections between our ideas themselves.[11]

The first and most general principle of connection between ideas and brain traces is "identity of time." If we have had certain thoughts at the very same time with certain new traces in our brain, we find that these traces cannot recur without our having, anew, those same thoughts. Supposing the idea of God to be present to our minds at the very moment that our vision or hearing receives the perception or sound of *Jah*, we recognize that it is only necessary for us to see or hear that word (and to have the brain traces made active) in order to think of God. Thus simultaneity is a principle of connection, not only between our brain traces and our thoughts, but between the very thoughts themselves.

A second cause of connection presupposes the first—it is the will of mankind, that is, the use of signs to refer to certain things they have in mind. The word is not seen or heard by accident, as in the former case. It is the deliber-

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[11] *Ibid.*, chap. v, entire.

ately-uttered word. These conventions of thought make for social life which is indispensable to the preservation of the human race.

The third cause of connection between brain traces and ideas is Nature, or to put it more profoundly, the constant and invariable will of God the Creator. It is established in nature that the traces of a tree in our brain produced by the tree should be united with our ideas of that tree. It is also very natural that the traces corresponding to our hearing of a cry of distress are linked with those that accompany our thought of pain, and even more, our active compassion. Such connections are the very strongest in our human experience. They are generally the same in all mankind. They are absolutely necessary to the preservation of life. Precisely because of their vital importance to us, they are not subservient to our human will, as are the former connections of thought. Those might well vary in different lands and be less strong than these which contribute so fundamentally to the life of man not simply as a social being but as a whole nature himself within universal Nature.

We have disclosed to us, now, three kinds of connection among our ideas according to the three causes of observable union between the physical and the mental orders. Some ideas join in our thinking merely by the accident of happening at the same time. They have a chance connection. Others owe their union to the will of man: they are conventions or customs. And, finally, the most important connections are those necessary by the will of God, the "natural" connections. By distinguishing these three modes of thought we are able to understand some peculiar errors to which the human mind is liable in its search for truth. It argues from the accidental and the conventional as if they were truly necessary connections of things. Thus "memory" and "habit" influence thought, and may actually stand in the way of its high pursuit of truth.

We look now to the activities of the Human Under-

standing, that is, of the Pure Spirit. Remembering that matter in the form of extension has an infinity of modes, we may suspect that spirit, too, has various modes of thinking, ordinarily unknown to us.[12] God has manifested His will in the motion of matter: God may give to our thought certain native movements or "natural inclinations" like those impulses already discovered in our active imagination. These we are now to examine.

Thinking must be interpreted from the side of our union with the Infinite God. Somehow God is present to us in our thought. We know that He is the Infinite Being. We recognise, too, our own limitations of thought. Even the finite things which we are quite capable of knowing we cannot understand distinctly as forming a whole universe.[13] For we are confined to a knowledge of the relations of things in our world. These relations are always definite and limited. Hence the infinite diversity of the Whole is never represented in such finite knowledge. A further defect of our knowledge is the fact that our attention itself is shifting and unstable, with the consequence that we cannot penetrate deeply by any steady vision of our object of thought. Yet this limitation is itself a certain hint of our very superiority as spiritual beings. Our attention depends upon our interest and moves from one thing to another so restlessly just because we do have a sense of our real object being the Good-in-general or God, and we recognise in all the particular objects of our world that *they* are not truly the objects of our supreme desire. The continual movement of our attention is witness to the presence of God in our spirit.[14]

This intimate and ineffaceable presence of God in our hearts and minds is one of the chief causes of all the wild abstractions of the mind and abstract philosophies. We cannot think at all without thinking of something existent,

[12] *Recherche*, Book III, chap. 1.
[13] *Ibid.*, chap. II, p. 349.
[14] *Ibid.*, chap. IV, pp. 363-4.

that is, of being in general. Even in our most idle moments, when we seem to be thinking of nothing whatsoever, we are full of a vague and general idea of some being. This is really never absent from our thought. And thus filled with the idea of the Infinite we are bound to represent it to ourselves in some form, as if we actually possessed the Infinite in a full knowledge of it. To explain then what we cannot really lay hold of in an "idea" we suppose a reality among the events we perceive, a reality we call "act," "power," "cause," "effect," "substantial form," "faculty," "occult quality," and the like.[15] When philosophers see some new event they immediately imagine a new entity to cause or produce it. For example, a fire warms us—there is, then, some entity which produces that effect and which is distinct from the matter composing the fire. Since fire is capable of many different effects, separating bodies, reducing them to ashes, and the like, these thinkers endow fire with as many various faculties or real qualities as there are effects. Yet no logic whatsoever requires such a thought. Nor is any knowledge gained by it. The only meaning it has is that we must think of Being-in-general and Cause-in-general. Instead of directing our attention, however, to the Infinite God who is all that is and makes all being what it is, these thoughts dissipate our mind in a confusion of abstract and fantastic notions. Thus physics is full of attractions, repulsions, and other mysterious powers. Philosophy is not content to define matter as "extension" but pushes beyond to the "substance" or principle of extension, and thence without end to the principle of the prior principle. Yet none of this is strictly necessary. We have no reason to depart from our clear and distinct ideas of extension, figure, and local movement to take up with such confused, general notions of "principle" or "subject of extension," "form," "real quality," and of imaginary movements of "generation," "corruption," "alteration," and

[15] *Recherche*, Book III, chap. VIII, pp. 418-22.

what not. All these are vagaries of a spirit with an instinct for True Being and Cause but still ignorant of its way.

There is an even more general tendency to error, due to a blind presumption of our understanding when it acts of its own accord. Whatever we do not know in the form of idea we are too ready to suppose non-existent. We are very prompt to judge all things in terms of our human understanding. The effect of this is to make reality too simple, and to ignore the infinite variety, subtlety, and depth of God's creation. Indeed, its ultimate effect is to deny God himself, for it denies the Infinite.[16]

We have already had evidence of this presumption of mind in our inevitable judgment that whatever we perceive really exists in itself exactly like our perception of it. A little study suffices to show that what we know about objects is only that which pertains to our physical existence among them and that the perceived qualities are but appearances serving to guide and direct our conduct. There is no reason for our belief that these qualities constitute the true and entire reality of objects. Yet this is what we constantly suppose. And in like manner we always infer that one thing happening in conjunction with some other thing is necessarily related to it and we expect the like occurrence time after time.[17] We suppose a likeness inherent in the events of nature. We are unwilling to allow real differentiation and novelty in our world. These presumptions are characteristic of the most general tendency of our human understanding, that to impose resemblance and simplicity upon the infinitely diverse reality of God's world.

We have ideas of two kinds of "substance," namely, mind and body. There is thinking substance and extended or material substance. We inevitably conclude that all existences must be either spirit or matter. This is no conclusion of reason. It is possible that some reality may be

[16] *Ibid.*, chap. IX, p. 430.
[17] *Ibid.*, chap. III, pp. 386-7; chap. VIII, p. 420.

neither spiritual nor material. To conceive that possibility, it is not necessary for us to define fully what such a being might be, although we may recognise God as the Being who is neither matter nor spirit exclusively but more than both in their union. It is sufficient to point out that we form a conception of such Being. We are not entitled to assume, then, that whatever is not matter is by that fact simply spirit. Nor are we right even to call God a spirit. God is the infinitely perfect and the human mind is but a finite perfection. Yet we all tend to divide our universe exhaustively into spiritual and material realities and confine God to but one order of those beings known to us through our limited human intelligence. This makes the world and God too simple, and too much in our own image.[18]

We assimilate every thing we come upon in life to our own limited experience of things. Resemblances we are quick to envisage, and we refuse to consider significant differences between objects. It is the easy way for us to think. It is hard to study all the details of the various realities in our ken and to comprehend them in the infinity of their diverse relationships with each other and within the whole Universe. The realisation that existing things may have relations and modes of existence different from those with which we are familiar in our experience is achieved with only the greatest effort of mind.

The natural tendency of mind, then, is to think in terms of the relation of resemblance. It is the primary way of taking in many data at one moment of thought. So all men imagine first that things of different nature are somehow of the same nature and then that things thus thought as of one species scarcely differ from each other at all. They judge things unequal to be equal, things inconstant to be constant, things without any order or proportion to be completely ordered and in proportion. They believe far too often that things naturally different in their very exis-

[18] *Recherche*, Book III, chap. IX, pp. 433-6.

tence, in their qualities, in their extension, in their duration and proportion are nevertheless resembling each other in precisely those respects. Such is the vast presumption of our human understanding.[19]

Specific examples of this imposing of the relation of resemblance upon reality are at hand. The greater number of people pay little attention to the radical distinction between mind and body, and since they live chiefly among material things, they cannot but imagine their soul like a material being extended throughout their body and having definite form like it. On the other hand, they attribute to their physical body the qualities of sensation, imagination, and sometimes even of conception, although these qualities belong by their very nature to mind and not to body. With regard to the physical world generally, we find the philosophers assuming that every concrete, particular reality, though distinct from every other, has some essential resemblance to others so that they constitute one species. They fancy this point of resemblance to be itself something indivisible. They then begin to think about such matters of fact as if they were mathematical numbers. When they cannot avoid seeing the actual differences between what they have made one in essence, they still tend to reduce these differences to insignificance by conceiving a determinate number of such differences or "forms" within the species—within such subordinate kinds no degrees seem to exist. This habit of supposing an identity in the resemblance or proportion of substances in respect to their nature, number, and even their essential differences extends to all things in our life. We read regularity into the events of the world. We suppose a uniformity in the duration of things. We will not admit the possibility of any real change or any instability in nature. Our native inclination affects even our judgment in moral affairs. From a single acquaintance with an Englishman, Frenchman, or Italian we form a general opinion of the qualities of their respec-

[19] *Ibid.*, chap. x, pp. 437-47.

tive nations. Likewise we blame all members of a religious order for the moral lapse of some one person of the group. These are all very precipitate judgments. They stand in the way of true knowledge. They blind us to the wonderful variety of the characters and activities of mankind. And just so are we ignorant of the beauty and wonder of the visible universe which really attests the glory of God. Our presuming habits of thought turn our mind away from truth.[20]

It behooves us, then, to guard against our own nature if we would obtain genuine salvation. Our senses and our imagination serve to save our bodies. If we remember this we shall know how to look beyond them for the truth. Our understanding is given us so that we can take in the vision of God. But it is intoxicated with its spiritual union with God and rushes hastily to know God, and it fancies Nature perfect, as we know it, and thus errs, for God is not Nature and the Perfect Being is nowhere comprehended in terms of those relations between things which our mind is so very prompt to establish. In this manner Malebranche would prepare mankind for the revelation that comes alone by the divine Grace of God.

Through the writings of Malebranche a new field of inquiry appeared. Hume had found out, on his own account, that the inferring of causes or effects is a process of mind for which no reason can be given. He could not believe that so important an act of thought is utterly arbitrary on the part of the whole human race. Then he saw many analogies for it in those different studies on the human understanding made by Montaigne, Hobbes, and particularly Malebranche. We presume to think the existence of a world distinct from our perceptions and continuing whether we are present or not. We make bold to ascribe a substantial identity to the transient realities with which we are acquainted in perception. Indeed, we venture even

[20] *Recherche,* Book III, chap. xi, pp. 448-52.

the supposition of a personal identity, or self, or soul, which exists simple and unchanging through all our variable perceptions. We seem bent upon attributing to everything characters that do not seem, upon a close examination, to belong to it,—identity, continuity, simplicity, necessity of connection, etc. Let objects be given us in an order of temporal succession and we promptly add to that a spatial contiguity. It seems inevitable that we should impose as much relation on what we perceive as the objects will sustain. This is particularly true of similarity. We are determined to regard Nature as uniform with itself in all times and places and qualities. Our thinking is thus one continual presumption that the unknown and the future are conformable to our past experience and that the events of that past have happened with an absolute regularity. So it appears that causal inference is but one instance of a general type of phenomenon. The process is neither arbitrary nor intrinsically rational, but "natural." It shows itself in certain persistent human beliefs about the world, not due to the sheer accidents of time and place, nor to mere convention, but to the original nature of man. Here was the opportunity for a new philosophical study, the Human Nature in all our Human Understanding.

When Hobbes observed such phenomena he spoke of our "seeking" imagination. Malebranche considered this quality of mind characteristic not only of "active imagination" but also of the intellect itself in its typical ventures;—the inherent mental tendencies are impulses having a divine source and end, working out in imagination, intellect, and conduct. Thus our very errors betray our overhasty attempts to reach the Perfect Being without the painful discipline of careful and detailed search for truth. Hence we cannot possibly interpret the "natural" connections of our thought and feeling by reference to the union of our mind with the material brain, for they are the will of God. Chance connections and customary connections are intelligible enough when regarded as the parallel to

what is taking place in the brain at the same time, but natural connections demand a spiritual interpretation. Hume may not have caught the religious fervor of Father Malebranche, but he did feel the joys of an explorer. His book was to develop the "science of man" for which philosophers had been preparing the way ever since the Renaissance.

The writings of John Locke were immensely important to Hume at this juncture. Locke had studied French philosophy. He made *An Examination of P. Malebranche's Opinion of Seeing All Things in God*. His own *Essay concerning the Human Understanding* was a painstaking and most comprehensive delineation of that subject, the product of a life rich in philosophic reflection, for it was not published until Locke was nearly sixty years of age. Its influence upon European thought had come to be very great, pervading the literature of the time. It was authoritative for Hume as well as others. Yet he challenged its high authority, for he knew that he had "innovations in philosophy" that would entirely revolutionise all thought. At times, in the *Treatise*, he could scarcely refrain from quite open disparagement of Locke. His own examination of the *Essay*, like that Locke made of Malebranche, showed him more definitely what it was he had to propose to the world of letters.

The theme of Locke seems to be that knowledge is "made by the mind."[21] He wants to display "man's power" in nature by virtue of the human understanding. This prompts him to repudiate, at the outset of his *Essay*, the doctrine of "innate ideas," for those supposedly inborn conceptions are really acquired by the mind itself in the course of its experience.[22] However, the mind cannot

[21] *Essay*, Book II, chap. XII, sec. 1; chap. XXII, sec. 2; chap. XXV, sec. 11; chap. XXX, sec. 3; Book III, chap. III, sec. 13; chap. V, sec. 10; Book IV, chap. XII, sec. 3.

[22] Cf. James Gibson, *Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations*, Cambridge, 1917, pp. 1, 22, 61.

construct the entire body of truth unaided. There must be "simple ideas" in it, produced by nature. Its chief work is to elaborate these into "complex ideas" and "abstract general ideas." By such constructions of thought we have the general concepts, "modes, substances, or relations," which form the greatest part of our knowledge.[23] Locke seems to think these activities of our mind are "voluntary,"[24] an aspect of our human power, our free-will. They justify our pride in our own reason which so clearly distinguishes us from the animals. They involve, too, a quite serious obligation, the cautious exercise of this genius in us by reflection upon our own limitations. Hence Locke writes another book on the *Conduct of the Understanding*. He has lifted man to an eminence, and he reminds this superior creature of the duties proper to so exalted a station.

Locke meets, however, with peculiar difficulties. If knowledge is a product of the mind working upon the ideas given it by nature, how can we be sure that the fabrication constitutes truth? Does knowledge so acquired represent reality? A Cartesian scepticism seems to lurk here. It cannot, indeed, affect the "simple ideas," for they "are not fictions of our fancies, but the natural and regular productions of things without us, really operating upon us. . . ."[25] But how secure are those complex and general ideas? They are acknowledged "fictions." Especially is this evident in the case of "relations" which, being "of my own making . . . can scarce be found to disagree with any thing existing, since they are not in the mind as the copies of things regularly made by nature . . ."[26] Still the situation is not entirely desperate. Simple ideas are true not because they are copies of reality but because they are "regularly made by nature." They are the effects regularly produced by external causes. They correspond, then,

[23] *Essay*, Book II, chap. XII, sec. 3.
[24] *Ibid.*, Book II, chap. XII, sec. 2; chap. XXI, sec. 4; chap. XXX, sec. 3.
[25] Book IV, chap. IV, sec. 4.
[26] Book III, chap. X, sec. 33.

to those things without us, not as images of them but as indications useful for our practical needs. Man is part of nature, and sensation and feeling are his means of successful intercourse with other things in nature. It is rather futile to ask whether there be any reality other than that which we thus know and respond to and manipulate, since such an unknown reality would make no practical difference in our actual dealings with objects. This is what Berkeley was to glean from Locke, and it is an obvious tendency of the *Essay*. For Locke eventually declares that although complex and general ideas seem to be nothing more than fictions (he excepts "substances" through a lingering predilection for the idea of substance), the faculties we employ in producing these ideas are, nevertheless, adapted "to the preservation of us, in whom they are, and accommodated to the use of life, they serve to our purpose well enough, if they will but give us certain notice of those things, which are convenient or inconvenient to us."[27] Because the productions of our "voluntary" acts of mind are of value for life they may be called "true." Thus Locke stills his doubt with a pragmatic theory of knowledge.

Though Hume would agree that complex and general ideas are as serviceable to us as any present, simple sensations and that most of the reasoning in terms of such conceptions, especially causal inference, is practically true, nevertheless he was not sure that we are entitled to call our conclusions about matters of fact "true." Something in Locke's description of the origin of those ideas obviously precludes their being certain truths. They are produced, Locke seems to say, by the "will" of man. On the other hand simple ideas are due to "nature." The former thus seem "arbitrary" by contrast with these "natural" effects of the objects upon our mind. They have, at best, the status of the conventional or customary, if we may be allowed

[27] Book IV, chap. xi, sec. 8.

to assume that a number of human wills work somehow in the same way and produce the same general concepts with which we think about the events of the world. But if we go on that assumption, why may we not frankly discard the element of human purpose or "will," and simply assert that a common human nature prompts all men to form the same thoughts? We have already discovered the fruitfulness of entertaining the hypothesis of "naturalism" with regard to the origin of the world—it is possible to conceive the order of nature without supposing a divine purpose or will,—and we have learned, incidentally, a very great deal about causal inference by making that venture. So here the common notions in our knowledge may be formed without our taking thought, without our individual intention, without our discerning any ground for them. This had been suggested by Montaigne, Hobbes, and Malebranche, that a certain body of common imaginings exists, distinct at once from strictly rational conceptions *and* from mere accidents of thought, or conventions, and therefore original in Human Nature. Hume was holding fast to that suggestion—it was the developing theme of his own new philosophy. It was, indeed, the only prospect of a solution for the doubts Locke himself had so candidly admitted.

But Hume was aware, too, that his solution was not entirely new—it was the same thought as Academic scepticism, the philosophy of Cicero. He wrote to Francis Hutcheson, on September 17, 1739, while still engaged in the completion of his *Treatise*: "I had indeed the former book [Cicero's *Offices*] in my eye in all my reasonings." And in the same letter: "You are a great admirer of Cicero, as well as I am. Please to review the fourth book of *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*."[28]

Cicero had characterised man, in these ethical writings, by several phenomena distinguishing him from the ani-

[28] Burton, Vol. I, pp. 114-5.

mals: reasoning from cause to effect and effect to cause and by analogy; sympathy; ambition or self-love; friendship or love of others; and curiosity.[29] He thus assimilated the operations of the human understanding with those of human sentiment and action in the world of society and civilisation. And it is obvious, indeed, that Hume had his eye on these books in all his thinking, for the chief topics of his *Treatise* are literally those here singled out by Cicero as typical of "human nature." The book on *Understanding* deals with the various inferences of the mind, particularly causal reasoning. That on the *Passions* treats of three outstanding kinds of sentiment, Pride and Humility, the self-regarding type, then Love and Hate, and finally Curiosity or Love of Truth. The book on *Morals* has for its central idea the working of sympathy in the lives of mankind. The whole scheme of the *Treatise* was before Hume's mind as he worked out his position with regard to the processes of the intellect. From the beginning, then, he was guided by the conception that these problematic phenomena of the understanding were "a species of natural instincts" like the dominant "passions" and active tendencies of man.

That analogy between causal reasoning and the affective life must have presented itself to Hume as more than a suggestion, for it had already been enlarged upon by the great makers of "systems" in the period of the Renaissance. Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Malebranche had made studies of the *Passions* of mankind and they had utilised the lore of antiquity. They took their classification of the emotions from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. They followed his analyses of the nature of a "passion." Even Hobbes, the outspoken modernist, honored Aristotle with a "brief" of this work. Malebranche, too, though he disliked the peripateticism of the Church in his day and tended to depreciate Aristotle, burst out into genuine eulo-

[29] *De Officiis*, Book I, chap. IV, tr. W. Miller, Loeb Classics, p. 13; *De Finibus*, Book II, chap. XIV, tr. H. Rackham, p. 133.

gy of the second book of the *Rhetoric* for its finely empirical study of human life. Spinoza must surely have read the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The outcome of these various enterprises was a new psychology, recognising the rôle of instinct in imagination as well as in feeling and action.

And the worldly-wise Cicero gave these writers their division of the types of human interest. Man is ambitious, and it is obvious that he loves himself. But it is also plain that he is social in his proclivities and capable of loyalty, justice, and friendship or love toward other persons. He is a being, too, who seeks knowledge, whence all our science and philosophy—in short, he loves truth. Now the modern philosophers caught up this happy description of the chief concerns of mankind and published it anew. They did not always weight the interests equally. Hobbes tended to subordinate the love of others to self-love, but he dwelt very emphatically, too, upon human curiosity as the character which marks us from the animals. Spinoza united the three *motifs* very remarkably, commencing with the theme of man's natural self-affirmation and working it out to an "intellectual love of God." Malebranche recognised all three, but, being deep-dyed in the Christian tradition, he made Love the fundamental impulse present in both the others, love of self, love of others, and love of truth.[30]

In all these studies of the emotional and active life of man it was made clear that much could take place in the mind without our being aware of the reason for it. To Spinoza a "passion" was a "confused idea" affirming more or less reality to our being and involving a certain "determination" of our thought one way or another, *without our comparing* the past with the present condition of our existence. This means that the affair is not one of pure intellect but of imagination.[31] And Malebranche likewise attributed it to the imagination. The soul of man is endowed

[30] Malebranche, *Recherche*, Book IV, chap. v.
[31] *Ethic, Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects*, end.

with native inclinations which give it an interest beforehand in certain specific objects. It is on the look-out for its object. And when this thing presents itself sensibly to our perception, it touches off the impulse in us and confirms or shatters our presentiment of good. In other words, the natural inclinations are always forwarding our thought toward the particular realities which will give them satisfaction and complete actuality.[32] And this forwardness is entirely impulsive, and in the imagination.

Hume saw, then, that such typical passions as love or pride were something like "complex ideas" in the realm of understanding. As he expressed it later, in the *Dissertation*, these "sentiments" are of a "complicated nature, and imply more than one view or consideration."[33] They are not sheer impulse. When we like anything we may quite simply enjoy it and think nothing more about the matter. But if what we enjoy is something particularly related to ourselves we feel not only pleasure but also satisfaction with *ourselves*, which is a form of "pride." Something unpleasant so connected with us evokes "humility." Our attention passes from the object to ourselves along with a change of feeling from pleasure or pain to the peculiar sentiment of self-satisfaction or dissatisfaction. And so we love other persons for some good that we first see in them or related to them. And truth itself we come to love, though in the first instance something else must present itself which makes the truth a desideratum. In all these sentiments there are elaborate connections of both thought and feeling which take place without our being conscious of the grounds for such complications. Yet these highly complex sentiments arise quite uniformly in every sensible creature. Though the particular objects which make us proud, or love others, or seek truth may vary from age to age and nation to nation, yet the passions themselves per-

[32] Malebranche, Book V, chap. III.
[33] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 144. Hume adopted the term "sentiment" in the *Dissertation*.

sist as constant factors in all human behavior. They are quite distinct from the purely accidental or the conventional. They are, in other words, "natural," like those common imaginings or beliefs which direct our lives. They constitute a very appropriate analogy for the puzzling phenomenon of causal inference.

But the most striking parallel to the operation of the mind in its inferences is the case of "sympathy." This had been an important subject of study for some of those British philosophers who immediately preceded Hume. He acknowledged, indeed, that they had commenced a great piece of work to which his own book would be but a contribution. They were, besides Locke, "my Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutchinson, Dr. Butler, etc." Their preoccupation was almost wholly with the life of sentiment and morals. Shaftesbury studied the *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times.* Mandeville likened man to the animals, in his *Fable of the Bees.* Hutcheson started his career with an *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, deploring in his *Preface* the almost exclusive interest of philosophers in the understanding—hence his later work, an *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections.* And Bishop Butler gave to the world his *Sermons on Human Nature*, portraying man as fundamentally a creature of impulse like the animals and achieving moral excellence only by "conscience" which is a wise reflection upon the complete meaning of our personal life.[34] Now an issue had arisen within the British world of letters, as to whether or not human life is dominated by Self-Love. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler stood opposed to the egoistic or "selfish" theory of morals. They felt a kinship with such an one as Malebranche, with his Platonism and his assertion of the existence of Love. They were versed, too, in

[34] It was probably the influence of these writers that moved Hume to incorporate special sections, in both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, on the reasoning and affections of animals.

their Aristotle and Cicero.[35] There is, they believed, a generous, disinterested tendency in mankind. And their attention fastened itself therefore, upon the ancient conception of "sympathy."

The observations of Butler in particular are very much in the manner of Aristotle in Books Eight and Nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Friendship is an association of persons who are in some respects alike. They do not come together because they know they are congenial. They simply express their own personal natures, and through doing the same kind of thing and moving in similar directions and pursuing like ends they meet each other in a union wherein they become virtually second selves to each other. This sympathy is, therefore, "a natural principle of attraction in man towards man." It does not arise from calculation or deliberate seeking of advantage. The ties or relations between men are not the "real principles" but only the "occasions," for the true factor of such community of life is a "prior disposition and bias of nature" which will make anything whatsoever the occasion or opportunity for such a union with our fellow-beings.[36]

Hume was very deeply impressed with Butler and his teaching. When he had finished his *Treatise* he obtained a letter of introduction to the reverend philosopher and sought an audience with him, hoping to elicit some opinion about his own work on Human Nature. A mere accident prevented the meeting. At a much later date he expressed exceeding pleasure over a report that the Bishop had spoken well of his literary *Essays*.[37] He was convinced, by the authority of this thinker, not only of the reality of a disinterested fellow-feeling in mankind but also of its actual prevalence over the strictly selfish tendencies. Again

[35] Cf. Selby-Bigge, *The British Moralists*, Oxford, 1897, Introduction, pp. xvii-xviii: "They concentrate their attention on the phenomena of the normal moral consciousness in a cool and impartial manner which reminds us of Aristotle, and had not notably been exhibited since Aristotle."
[36] Selby-Bigge, *op. cit.*, sec. 207.
[37] Burton, Vol. I, pp. 64-5, 143.

and again he referred to this fact of sympathy, in all his writings.[38] And in his studies of social and political phenomena he ascribed to this principle, rather than to the soil or climate or other outward circumstance, the remarkable uniformity of national characters and life.[39] It had been firmly instilled into his mind that sympathy was a "natural principle of attraction" essential to the life of man as we know him.

Hume made no great pretence to originality in his two books on *Passions* and *Morals* which he *planned* at the *beginning* of his undertaking with regard to the human understanding. He knew that his work was only following out the achievements of his predecessors, particularly the British writers. These studies were to be offered to the public in order to *corroborate* the conception of human nature which he had in mind.[40] Since the doctrines of the later books were in considerable favor with the world, and at least familiar to people, they might help usher in some of those novelties concerning the intellectual life which seemed too difficult for the ordinary reader to grasp. When it is once realised that sympathy, and love and hate, pride and humility, and the seeking for truth are processes of mind occurring without our being acquainted with the grounds for them, it may be possible to accept a philosophy which explains causal inference as a "natural judgment." There is a Human Nature in our sentiments and actions, why not in our understanding?

There is nothing more ambiguous than the term Na-

[38] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 111 *f.*, 141-52, 168 *f.*, 271 *f.*, 335 *f.*, 371 *f.*; *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 206 *f.*, 215 *f.*, 226, 249 *f.*, and Appendix "Of Self-Love."

[39] This was a criticism, by anticipation, of the theory to be advanced by Montesquieu in *l'Esprit des Lois* (1748), that the spirit of a nation and its institutions depends upon material conditions. For Hume the native interests of man and the imagination through which they gain expression have a more significant rôle to play in the shaping of a nationality. Yet he was among the first in Britain to recognise the greatness of Montesquieu and he actually took the initiative in having the book translated into English—see the letters between them, Burton, Vol. I, pp. 304-5, 456-7.

[40] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 88, 113, 120, 165, 233-4.

ture.[41] But Hume did not leave it so, for he had come to conceive Nature in a very definite way. The element of truth in Locke's statement about the origin of simple ideas is in the phrase that they are "regularly made by nature." Our simple ideas are produced in us according to causal laws. "Regularity" means, precisely, "according to some rule or law." And so Nature is defined for Hume by this character of being regular or uniform. Whatever man can understand in terms of definite principles of his experience he may call "natural." All else is arbitrary, or even illusory.

When Hume attributes the complex and general ideas, by which man ordinarily interprets things, to Human Nature, he believes that their formation can be represented in terms of some principle or principles. And when he does the same with regard to human sentiments he means that such principles discernible in the realm of understanding hold, likewise, in the life of emotion and action. As he expressed it in the conclusion to his *Dissertation*, there is here a "regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy."

To advance his solution of the great problem concerning our complex ideas and sentiments—particularly, of course, the idea of cause and effect—he must show us these laws characteristic of the nature of man. And he found them in the various writings which he had already studied so carefully. Hobbes had described the "ranging" of the mind in thought as a going from one place and time to the next until it comes to that which it is "seeking." The recalling of some event involves this movement of thought from the times and places *contiguous* with its occurrence. Hobbes spoke, too, of the seeking of *causes and effects* as another general type of mental discourse. Then Malebranche described, in great detail, our habit of thinking

[41] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 249-50. Cf. Bayle, *Réponse aux Questions d'un Provincial*, chap. xv (*Oeuvres*, Vol. III, p. 713); Berkeley, *Alciphron*, Dialogue I, sec. 14.

in terms of *resemblance* between things. Even causal inference involves this habit: we infer causes or effects *like* those with which we are familiar through experience. In the life of emotion and impulse this same relation plays a great rôle, as human sympathy shows, for we feel, think, and act in sympathy with those who are especially *like* ourselves. Other than these three principles Hume could find none. These, then, are the laws of mind, contiguity of time and place, cause and effect, and resemblance.

Imagination is active in certain determinate ways which we can formulate in the three principles of contiguity, resemblance, and causality. Whenever we find ourselves believing something beyond our evidence, therefore, we may identify some one or more of these principles in the process of thought. Thus causal inference is no sheer anomaly, for it is an instance of the very type of all thinking. It is not a "wild ranging" but an operation determined by the inherent tendencies of our own human nature. That origin accounts for the remarkable agreement among men with regard to their most general beliefs and attitudes. All the world over they refer constantly to "causes," "external objects," and "persons." They treat space and time as practically infinite and they conceive all objects as existing within space and time and as acting causally upon each other. Of course they may not definitely formulate these conceptions, but even the inaccurate singling out of certain uniform general ideas and naming them in language is the testimony to a regular or natural imagination in mankind.

Hume might not have won his great insight, at the early age of eighteen, into the questionable character of all inference, had it not been for Berkeley's pretentious demonstration for a theism. He caught a glimpse of a very real alternative to that way of thinking, the view of order coming into things without the deliberate construction of some Mind. That naturalism had worked silently in his thought and reading. And when Locke appeared before

him with elaborate volumes in proof of his grand thesis that all knowledge is the fruit of man's powers of conscious will, he saw an alternative—knowledge comes as the result of factors in the nature of man which determine human thought and conduct prior to all deliberation and free choice of the way we shall live. The books of Berkeley led to the sceptical question. Locke's *Essay* eventually taught Hume his solution.[42]

But Hume was ill-fated beyond ordinary mortals. It happened that Locke had added a chapter to the fourth edition (1700) of his book, after he had been engaged upon his *Examination* of Malebranche, in which he took notice of certain complex ideas arising in the mind independent of our will. He seems to have been impressed by what Malebranche had described as the chance or customary connections of ideas. These compound notions were the source of most of our errors. We must reckon with such a phenomenon, if we are to have a complete view of our human understanding. Locke called it "the association of ideas." It is "a sort of madness," "something unreasonable in most men," a "connection of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom; ideas, that, in themselves, are not all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds, that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang, always inseparable, show themselves together."[43]

[42] Hume seems to have recognized this debt in his later appreciation of Locke in the *Enquiry*, see A. Meinong, *Hume-Studien, Zur Relationstheorie*, Leipzig, 1913, p. 26n. On the originality of his solution, see Compayré, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 102-3; J. Volkelt, *Erfahrung und Denken*, Leipzig, 1886, pp. 105-9; O. Quast, *Der Begriff des Belief bei D. Hume*, Halle, 1903, pp. 89-90; Hedvall, op. cit., pp. 4, 8, 46; W. C. Gore, *The Imagination in Spinoza and Hume*, Chicago, 1902, pp. 33, 40; R. Richter, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 281, 295, 299, 569; E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem* (Hume), Berlin, 1911, 2nd ed., Vol. II, pp. 346, 370-2, 379-83; L. Brunschvicq, *L'Experience Humaine et la Causalité Physique*, Paris, 1922, p. 16.

[43] *Essay*, Book II, chap. xxxiii.

Now Hume seized upon this phrase "association of ideas." It seemed a happy designation for all *activities* of mind whatsoever that are *not voluntary*, especially in view of Cicero's linking of inference with association of man with man. What appeared to be such an anomaly to Locke was in reality the very rule throughout the realm of human understanding.[44] Our most important conceptions were produced not by our deliberate will as rational beings but by our natural or instinctive imagination. So Hume took up this phrase and used it to describe the fundamental type of all thought. He had in mind, particularly, those "precipitate judgments," judgments in advance of experience or evidence which Malebranche, the philosopher-priest, had felt himself obliged to interpret as due to the influence of God in our human spirit and not to the brain. Yet, within a few years after the *Treatise* appeared, Hartley was to develop the view that association of ideas is explained by the connection of brain traces and that its one law is contiguity.[45] It was this doctrine of association which came to prevail in subsequent years. It fixed the meaning of the term. We can hardly read Hume today without thinking him an "associationist," and we almost forget that he set out upon his ambitious study of human nature only because he could not understand, any more than the discriminating Malebranche, how those typical aspects of our human knowledge can be accounted for by mere reference to brain physiology.[46]

What Hume meant by "association" we learn best from some of his later studies. The book on the *Passions* is an

[44] Hutcheson had brought out the "natural determination of the mind" in such processes, although he spoke of the "association of ideas" as the purely "casual conjunctions of ideas."—*An Inquiry into the Originals of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 2nd ed., London 1726, sec. 6, arts. 3, 10, and 11, pp. 75, 82 *f.*

[45] H. C. Warren, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 15, 46, 50-64. He very properly excludes Hume from legitimate membership in the "Associationist" school.

[46] Only once does Hume broach the physiological explanation and then it is to account for an "error," and not for any valuable complex idea or conception of the mind. Moreover, he suspects his explanation, in that case, of being "chimerical." Vol. I, pp. 364-5.

inquiry into the production of our human sentiments by association. That dealing with *Morals* ascribes to the same phenomenon of imagination the prevailing moral conceptions among men. Now when Hume writes about the "moral subjects," matters of history, politics, society, and religion, he never takes a mechanical view of man's life. Indeed, upon revising his own book on the understanding, he inserted a lengthy footnote to illustrate association, wherein he points to the different principles of literary *genre*, some kinds of literature following the principle of contiguity in place and time and others all three principles, which indicates that he conceived "association" as something purposive like the creative imagination.[47] He speaks of it as "genius," "a kind of magical faculty in the soul."[48] The vision of this pervasive magic of mind transported him beyond measure, and it sent him exploring in Human Nature.

[47] *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 19n *ff.*
[48] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 331. Cf. K. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 80, and A. Thomsen, *David Hume, Sein Leben und Seine Philosophie*, Berlin, 1912, pp. 404, 422 *ff.*

CHAPTER FOUR

The Theory of Relations and Mental Habits

THE common defect of those systems, which philosophers have employed to account for the actions of the mind, is, that they suppose such a subtility and refinement of thought, as not only exceeds the capacity of mere animals, but even of children and the common people in our own species; who are notwithstanding susceptible of the same emotions and affections as persons of the most accomplished genius and understanding." Living creatures who share the same feelings and sentiments will surely understand their world in much the same general way. Indeed, it is quite obvious that men have a certain common sense in regard to all their vital concerns. Their judgments are probably, however, as impulsive as their feelings. They form their opinions without any great deliberation or reflection. How these natural judgments are possible no philosopher has yet explained, for all are too much inclined to glorify thinking, as they observe it in their own fine thoughts, to give an authentic account of the mind of the common people. It is the attempt to do this that constitutes the precise originality "of our present system concerning the nature of the understanding." This is what Hume announces in his conclusion to *Knowledge and Probability*.[1]

Knowledge has to do with relations and general conceptions. This had been the opinion of both Malebranche and Locke. When we understand something we know it as related to other perceptible things that are either present to us at the moment or represented in our past experience. A science or body of knowledge consists, then, of things comprehended in terms of certain "complex" and "general" ideas. For instance, we may regard a certain event as the

[1] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 469-70.

effect of some cause. The event is known in the relation we conceive it to sustain with the "cause." At the same time we may conceive the very relation itself through the things related. We think of the "causation" and we have a "general idea" of it as something universally applicable to events. Thus it follows that Hume's "innovations in philosophy" will affect primarily these elementary conceptions, namely "relations" and "universals."

Those remarks about the reasoning of children and common people are reminiscent of Berkeley, who criticised Locke's views on "Abstract Ideas" in this manner: "Is it not a hard thing to imagine that a couple of children cannot prate together of their sugar plums and rattles and the rest of their little trinkets, till they have first tacked together numberless inconsistencies, and so framed in their minds abstract general ideas, and annexed them to every common name they make use of."[2] Though Locke possessed a rich fund of good sense, he described the formation of general ideas far too abstractly, after the sifting, deliberate manner of the philosopher in his study. The specific points that Berkeley had made against Locke were to Hume "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters."[3]

The beginning of all knowledge is, according to Locke, the formation of general ideas of things: "The first thing it [the mind] does, as the foundation of the easier enlarging its knowledge [beyond the simple ideas given it by nature], either by contemplation of the things themselves that it would know, or by conference with others about them, is to bind them into bundles, and rank them so into sorts, that what knowledge it gets of any of them it may thereby with assurance extend to all of that sort, and so advance by larger steps in that which is its great business,

[2] *Principles*, sec. 14, p. 247.
[3] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 325.

knowledge. This, as I have elsewhere shown, is the reason why we collect things under comprehensive ideas, with names annexed to them, into genera and species, *i.e.*, into kinds and sorts."[4] Now in its details this operation of the mind appears very complicated. Though nature seems to contain certain "kinds" that exist quite independent of our understanding, "yet, I think, we may say the sorting of them [the particular things we perceive] under names is the workmanship of the understanding, taking occasion, from the similitude it observes amongst them, to make abstract general ideas, and set them up in the mind, with names annexed to them."[5] And "ideas become general by separating from them the circumstances of time and place, and any other ideas that may determine them to this or that particular existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more individuals than one; each of which having in it a conformity to that abstract idea, is (as we call it) of that sort."[6] Then the naming of the general idea with a single word is also an act, on our part, of "voluntary imposition."[7] Indeed the whole process is deliberate fabrication by the mind. We observe resemblance among things. We compare them in respect to their relations of time, place, and other qualities of existence. We abstract from the concrete particulars a general nature distinct from the instances which exhibit it. And finally, we mark this abstract conception by some term for the purposes of reflection and conversation.

Berkeley has both a denial and an affirmation to make concerning this elaborate process of the mind. There is no idea in the mind unless it has a definite, particular existence. Every thing we think is something in particular, with qualities, and degrees of qualities distinctive of itself. No thing can be perceived by the mind which is at

[4] *Essay*, Book II, chap. xxxii, sec. 6.
[5] *Ibid.*, Book III, chap. iii, sec. 13.
[6] *Ibid.*, secs. 6-7.
[7] *Ibid.*, chap. ii, sec. 1.

once common to a number of different things and yet itself nothing in particular. Such an entity is simply a fiction. It has no reality. An impoverished notion of this sort is the philosophic "idea" of "matter" as a substance other than the things we perceive. It is utterly without meaning, virtually nothing but a word. "I do not deny absolutely there are *general ideas*, but only that there are any *abstract general ideas*."[8]

Besides denying that we actually have "abstract ideas," Berkeley insisted that our formation of general ideas is purely a matter of utility. The first business of the mind is not to find truth but to maintain life. The motive of thought is not, at the outset, intellectual in character. Even Locke himself admitted that we take this step of conceiving kinds and sorts only because it is the easier way of getting knowledge beyond the simple ideas of nature. From this it follows that the kinds we do conceive are only such as have some bearing on the purposes of our life. The things we name are what we recognise to be of some importance to us. For language is not designed primarily for truth, but for action.[9] So "a word becomes general by being made the sign, not of an abstract general idea, but of several particular ideas, any one of which it indifferently suggests to the mind."[10] The idea it suggests is necessarily, then, some particular idea which "becomes general by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort." Thus the "universality" in the idea is not "the absolute, positive nature or conception of anything, but in the relation it bears to the particulars signified or represented by it."[11] Now of a relation we have no idea, only a "notion."[12] Hence every general idea is really a particular idea conceived with a notion of some resemblance it bears to other ideas of our experience. Such an

[8] *Works*, Vol. I, (*Principles*), sec. 12, p. 245.
[9] *Ibid.*, sec. 20, p. 251.
[10] *Ibid.*, sec. 11, p. 244.
[11] *Ibid.*, secs. 12, 15, pp. 245, 247.
[12] *Ibid.*, sec. 142, par. added in second edition, p. 338.

operation of the mind children and ordinary persons can quite easily perform. And only so simple an act must ever be ascribed to the beginnings of our human understanding.

These observations were "most valuable" for Hume. The first one taught him how to show the inadequacy of the accepted explanation of our most common ideas and the necessity of some new theory.[13] All thinking involves "relations," like that special one of "resemblance," which cannot be distinctly perceived as ideas. Nothing ought to be called a genuine idea unless it is definitely perceived as a particular quality or thing. We cannot say, then, that we think of general ideas under certain names by means of an abstract idea of their generality. And we are in the same predicament with regard to our reasoning in terms of cause and effect. For Malebranche has rightly claimed that we observe only the conjunction of two billiard balls that meet and rebound from each other, and not the power "causing" such effects. We have no perception, moreover, of such causation even in the moving of our limbs by our internal will. In no instance do we have an "idea" of the "necessity" of any connection between distinct existences. We are not justified then, in pretending that we conclude the existence of some particular effect or cause from an "idea" of their "necessary connection" with each other. We have no prior conception of that ground or bond of unity between the particular things which makes them members either of a causal relation or of a general kind. How, then, shall we explain these processes of mind? Some new "system" is needed—and this Hume will provide. And whenever he is preparing to offer his own explanation, in the *Treatise*, he resorts to this simple test, learned from Berkeley: Is there a distinct idea in our minds when we reason to this or that common belief? If not, we shall have to account for the belief by recourse to this new theory of imaginative association.

[13] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 326, 332.

As Hume reflected upon this topic of *Abstract Ideas* he seems to have found the clue to his own description of the whole type of these remarkable operations of our mind. Here is Locke's account of the affair. We gather our ideas into bundles or groups for the sake of intellectual facility in the acquisition of knowledge. To make such collections we have to discriminate between the ideas that will go together and those that will not do so. But to select and reject our ideas we need some model, so that we may guide ourselves by the conformity or non-conformity of the particular ideas with it. And lastly, in order to obtain such a standard idea we must compare our ideas in respect to their resemblances with each other and abstract from those that are alike their point of likeness, their common nature. And this is the "abstract idea." Now Berkeley argues that there is no such abstract general idea. We are not guided by any abstract model in collecting ideas into sorts and kinds. Then Berkeley adds that we are simply impelled by the practical needs of our life to take such and such particulars as the same kind of thing.[14] Indeed Locke himself tacitly recognises this when he ascribes the formation of general ideas to our seeking of knowledge by the most convenient way. Thus our general ideas are not founded upon any *insight* into the unity and relation of the particular ideas. So Locke's many processes do not really take place. There is no collection of particulars based upon a discrimination of their abstract "kind" which is in turn supposed to be conceived through a comparison of the particulars in terms of their resemblance with each other. These operations collapse into a single, direct impulse of thought. Guided by some practical necessity, we simply take such and such particular ideas together as forming a whole of one sort. We make our collection and refer to it by means of some term in language. We do not first discern the point of resemblance and then collect the ideas—in conceiving them

[14] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 326, 328.

as one sort we are then and there *assimilating* them to each other. It is only *after the fact* that we may identify the particular circumstance in respect of which the divers things are related to each other so as to form one kind. Even then the resemblance we discern is nothing more than a resemblance between precisely those ideas which we have already collected as members of a general kind. Thus the whole process appears to take place *according to* the principle of resemblance but not *on the basis of it*. It is not reasoning: it is still, however, a regular, determinate operation of the mind, that is, an "association of ideas."[15]

The general character of this imaginative process is very clearly revealed by the special case before us. The primary steps of the mind are always an impulsive uniting and connecting of the things of our experience. We give relation to things before we appreciate any ground or principle of their relationship. And since Hume's entire theory is being offered in order to explain the inference to cause or effect, his new view will exhibit its most striking originality in that case. We are always aware of a "necessity" in every relation of cause and effect and yet we never actually conclude the existence of one from the other on the basis of a distinctly conceived "bond," "tie," or "necessary connection" between them. The "most violent" paradox of the *Treatise* is this, that *the necessity of the connection depends upon the impulse* of the mind in its thinking.[16] The necessity is only felt while the mind is being determined to move from one thought to another. This throws the whole rationale of thought upon the determinate but in-

[15] Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 64, 75, 81-3.

[16] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 460 *ff*. We are prepared for this paradox on p. 389: "Perhaps 'twill appear in the end, that the necessary connection depends on the inference. . . ." In the same way Butler had described sympathy as based not on "real principles" of union recognised by those who enter into it but on a "prior disposition and bias of nature" which *makes* what we afterwards call the "relations."—Selby Bigge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, sec. 207.

voluntary tendencies and impulses of the nature of man. That is why the *Treatise* is about *Human Nature.*

So the discovery of Berkeley was of genuinely vital importance to Hume. By his study of *Abstract Ideas* he gained a clearer view of the details of the process of "association" and at the same time an effective way of presenting the deficiency of Locke's general type of explanation. Consequently Hume paid his express tribute to Berkeley's genius and included his own version of the doctrine of *Abstract Ideas* among "the elements of this philosophy." And when Francis Hutcheson argued against it he very firmly, though respectfully, stood his ground.[17] That position was an integral part of his own thought.

There is no mistaking the fact, however, that Hume has added something new to the doctrine. His own independent study of causal inference reacted upon his treatment of Berkeley's view. If we ask ourselves what is *in* our minds when we proceed to infer the existence of one specific thing from the presence of another, we cannot say "an idea of the necessity of their connection," but must reply, "custom." That is, we are not guided in our inferences by insight but solely by our past experience. Though we are always bent upon assimilating events to each other in nature, that is, expecting the future to resemble the past, we find in the course of time that only certain objects appear in regular conjunction with certain others. From these usual appearances alone we learn what specific causes or effects to expect in any new situation. And that learning resides in our minds as a "custom." Once we have had experience, we approach all life with these particular habits of mind operative in us, so that we relate the coming events in the very definite ways that conform to our own experience. Thus causal inference is a very useful act of mind.

[17] Letter of March 12, 1740, Burton, Vol. I, p. 118: "Though with regard to *abstract ideas*, 'tis with difficulty I can entertain a doubt on that head, notwithstanding your authority."

Every such operation represents not simply blind impulse but trained habits.[18] And the training one individual mind receives is generally the same as that of another, for the common purposes of life are in all mankind very much the same, inducing the same experiments at making nature perfectly uniform, and bringing about the same conception of what particulars are necessarily connected with others. Thus we all tend to form the same common notions about our world and believe the same truths. We convey these general relationships to each other in languages which, though differing, have correspondent words for each relation and meaning. And this feature suggests that we actually form the same general ideas as well as conceive the same relations,—the same, that is, "for the purposes of life." Hence the true guide for all of our thinking in general terms is some "custom" like that which determines us to conceive a particular cause or effect.

This is an advance in the theory of knowledge. For Berkeley had put nothing in place of the discarded "abstract idea." We have a word-image and a particular idea which it suggests, and only some vague "notion" of the universal meaning of that idea. But notions are almost disreputable outcasts in the philosophy of Berkeley, without status among the spiritual agents or the "inert" ideas which together comprise the whole of what exists. Yet all "relations" are only such notions. They can be nothing real in Berkeley's sense. But if this were so, we should have an end of knowledge, for all genuine progress in learning is the discovery of new relations between events of nature—and Hume rightly felt that the doctrine as left by his predecessor led straightway to a most radical scepticism.[19] There must be a definite status for relations and universals, something better than that of "notion." They cannot be classed among "ideas," in the light of Berkeley's

[18] This significant meaning of "habit" Butler had already introduced, conscious that it was not the accepted sense of the term.—*Analogy of Religion*, chap. v, sec. 2, Everyman edition, pp. 65-6.

[19] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 127 n.

criticism, for they are incapable of being represented in and by themselves *to* the mind which thinks *in terms of* them. They must, therefore, be *habits of the mind* itself, operative in its thinking about particular things. Relations are real factors in our knowledge of the world and they represent something very real in nature. Thus alone do we escape scepticism.[20]

In order to provide for these "innovations in philosophy" Hume had to describe the mind in his own way. The opening Part of the *Treatise* contains new terminology and distinctions. Thus anything that enters the mind in any form is a "perception." Locke had used the term "idea," but it is necessary to distinguish between an "idea" and an "impression" which together comprise our perceptions. The impressions are characterised by the greater "force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness." The ideas are the "faint images of these in thinking and reasoning." The distinction is, roughly, that between "feeling and thinking."

Impressions are "all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul." We recognise them for what they are *prima facie*. We do not treat them as images of anything. They are simply what is really present in existence, not representing anything without us or beyond themselves. They are not even the effects of physical causes acting upon us: "By the term of 'impression' I would not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves, for which there is no particular name either in the English or any

[20] Cf. Otto Selz, *Die Psychologische Erkenntnistheorie und das Transcendenzproblem*, Leipzig, 1909, p. 93: "Berkeley hatte die naive Weltanschauung wiederentdeckt, aber erst gelang Hume es sie wirklich zu rekonstruiren."

other language, that I know of."[21] We are not to think of them as being impressed upon the plastic tablet of our mind. Indeed we must remember that our emotions and passions, as well as our sensations, are impressions, and we certainly do not pretend that *they* copy some other reality or external object of which they are also the effects.[22] In fact, they best illustrate the very meaning of that description, that impressions "make their way into consciousness," for emotions and sentiments are notoriously invasive and engrossing. Impressions are, quite generally then, the things which strike, engross, or interest us —in short, they are impressive *to* our minds.

It is now appropriate to introduce Locke's distinction between the simple and the complex, the former being what cannot be reduced by analysis into parts. There are complex perceptions. And this means complex impressions as well as complex ideas. Now so long as every thing that enters the mind is called, indiscriminately, "idea," it seems plausible to ascribe the making of composite ideas to "voluntary" acts of the mind, for it is a fact that we do manipulate ideas and put them together and compare them in the manner Locke described. But the human will has obviously no power to make up any complex impressions. We are not able, merely by taking thought, to summon original sensations or affections into being. To "will" that such primary feelings shall join together into a complex unity of feeling, we should require some initial idea in our mind as a clue to that composition at which we would aim. Yet we could form such an idea only on condition that some original *impression* for it were already *given us by nature*. And besides, so difficult is it for us to form ideas

[21] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 312n. The term "impression" is to be found in Montaigne and Malebranche. Hume introduced it into British thought with the hope probably that philosophers would the more readily slough off their habit of conceiving perceptions as effects of the mechanical action of objects upon the brain. Hedvall insists, however, that *clarity* and not interest is the basis of Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas. —*Op. cit.*, pp. 28, 30 n, 40.

[22] *Treatise*, Vol. II, p. 236.

of complex feelings that we often find it impossible to recapture in "idea" some impression of which we have actually had experience through the natural conjunction of feelings. All this suggests that *complex impressions* must have their origin somewhere in the mind below the threshold of conscious and voluntary thought. There is impulsive imagination bringing to pass an "association of impressions" as well as ideas.[23]

Before we come to the association of ideas, however, we must thoroughly understand the meaning of a "simple idea." It is defined by reference to both its origin and its representative character. "All our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent." It seems as if Hume would have to face all the difficulties of Cartesian dualism in regard to these ideas and the impressions they represent. However he is exceedingly careful in his statement. The impression is neither "outside the mind" (as material objects had been conceived) nor does it "cause" its representation in the form of idea (as physical objects were thought to produce ideas). Hume has no intention of being drawn, thus early, into a discussion of the meaning of "external existence," much less of "causation," for "the *full* examination of this question is the subject of the present treatise." What he refers to in his proposition is a simple fact of our common experience. The "first appearance" of something that strikes our attention and interests us is our impression of it and afterwards we never think about it without recognising it to be the same as we perceived on the first occasion. The representation of the thing is our idea of it. What we perceive at different times does not have a modified content every time it is represented. It is the same object. But does not

[23] Book II of the *Treatise* deals entirely with complex emotions and passions; Book I almost exclusively with complex ideas.

Hume have to confront the still more difficult problem of the "identity" of these different perceptions? This, too, is a philosophical issue which he wants to defer until later. For the present it is enough to observe that the "exact representation" means only the close "resemblance" between them for "the purposes of life." The objects about which we think are sufficiently like those which we have felt for us to treat them as exactly the same things. Indeed we acknowledge that there are real differences between them when we note both the greater vividness and the priority in appearance of the impressions to the ideas. We must do justice, however, to the seeming continuity of our mental life: the ideas that are the objects of thought represent to us *now* what we *have* perceived as impressions. This is a first principle in our understanding of the world.

It is, however, a merely descriptive principle. We cannot demonstrate it by any logic. To prove that a simple idea must be preceded by a simple impression corresponding to it, we should be obliged to show that the contrary state of affairs is inconceivable and contradictory. But an experiment is easily imagined where we might find an idea giving rise to some new impression. If we were to arrange colors in graded order, and omitted one shade of blue, for example, we might discover that a person who has never known that particular color could nevertheless be made aware of it, through imagining what it would be like as situated between the colors adjoining the gap in the series. Such a case would, indeed, be very anomalous, but it is clearly possible. Consequently we must regard this principle simply as a generalisation or interpretation of our ordinary experience. Its value is largely its "use in our reasonings." In fact, Hume will employ it only as an instrument of analysis. Every idea is to be traced to its corresponding distinct impression. Whenever we cannot do so we may properly regard the idea in question as a complex idea that has been naturally formed by the imagina-

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tion and not compounded out of simple impressions or ideas by deliberate activities of our understanding. Such ineluctably complex ideas will then be the instances requiring explanation by the "association of ideas."

But we are to beware at once of a view of mental life too exclusively intellectual. We should not forget that while representations follow upon sense impressions there are also other sorts of impressions consequent even upon ideas. Just how sensations arise we do not know.[24] But it is a matter of observation that ideas evoke "new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it." It is quite possible, of course, for emotions and passions to surge up into consciousness immediately upon the direct perception of some object. But usually we have an intervening moment of some imagery or reflection, and then we feel the new and distinct emotion or passion with regard to the object represented to us. Notwithstanding the "secondary" character of these impressions of reflection, therefore, they are quite as ultimate in our experience as are the primary sensations.[25] They appear naturally and involuntarily. What is more, they emerge under conditions which we can observe to be regular for all mankind. There is thus the promise of a genuine "science" of the affective life as well as of the human understanding. To this research Books II and III are de-

[24] This conveys a doubt concerning the adequacy of the physiological "explanation" of sense perception. See above, p. 101n.

[25] The "idea of reflection" is for Locke a perception of our mental acts of perceiving, thinking, willing, etc.; *i.e.*, the modes of consciousness (Book II, chap. 1, secs. 1, 4). Descartes had spoken of thoughts that were "images" and those that were our modes of being conscious (*Meditation Five*). Hume agrees that we feel the quality of our mental operations, for he makes "necessity" the feeling of our mental determination to infer, and "identity" the feeling of the easy transition of our thought. But these feelings belong to a still wider group of phenomena, perceptions that are as "natural and necessary" as sensations, and yet quite distinct from them in their nature. They are what Hutcheson called "internal perceptions" (*An Enquiry*, 2nd ed., London, 1726, p. xiv; *An Essay*, 1728, pp. x-xi). Hutcheson wanted to make beauty and morality as much objects of "sense" as the other qualities of our world.

voted, while Book I leads the way with a study of imagination as it is involved in our knowledge and intellectual beliefs.

As we survey the field of our understanding, we are struck at once by the fact that we think not merely of impressions and ideas with their differences of force or liveliness but of their *order*. This is obvious in the very definition of memory. The characteristic feature of this act of mind is that "we repeat our impressions" in "their order and position," that is, in practically the same place and time and relations of their original appearance. And what marks the imagination is this, that it "is not restrained to the same order and form with the original impressions."

But this at once raises a question concerning the order apprehended in the original perception and the memory—to what is it due? It is not a perceived connection or relation. Take, for instance, time, which appears to us as a past, present and future. Locke had said: "The mind has a power in many cases to revive perceptions which it has once had, with this additional perception annexed to them that it has had them before."[26] But all Hume can discover is that we now have an idea, in memory, of something that has once taken place, without any separate and additional idea of its time of appearance. Whatever time may be, it cannot be identified with a distinct perception.[27] Yet, despite this lack of information, we *place* the thing represented to us by our memory in the scene of its first appearance, that is, in the *past*. There thus spreads out before us an order of realities extending in time. As Hume puts it later: "'Tis evident, that whatever is present to the memory, striking upon the mind with a vivacity, which resembles an immediate impression, must become of considerable moment in all the operations of the mind, and must easily distinguish itself above the mere fictions of the imagina-

[26] *Essay*, Book II, chap. x, sec. 2.
[27] This topic is treated at length in the next Part of the *Treatise*.

tion. Of these impressions or ideas of the memory we form a kind of system, comprehending whatever we remember to have been present, either to our internal perception or senses; and every particular of that system, joined to the present impressions, we are pleased to call a *reality*."[28] But the work of imagination is not always such "fiction." When we infer causes or effects we are imagining, and what we then infer we also believe to be real. Hence we form a still more extensive system of realities, comprehending all that we perceive through our senses, memory, and imagination.[29] And in the *Conclusion to this Book* Hume summarises what he has attempted to show, that "the memory, senses, and understanding are . . . all of them founded on the imagination."[30]

The source of all the envisaged order in nature is our imagination. But we are not to think of this activity of mind as being a complete "liberty to transpose and change its ideas" in their form and position, for we observe that our simple ideas "fall regularly into complex ones." This holds in the experience not only of an individual but also of all mankind. However differently men speak of their complex ideas, their "languages so nearly correspond to each other"[31] that we cannot avoid the conclusion that the very ideas themselves must be common to them and produced by a common human nature. Despite its freedom of fancy, then, our imagination is profoundly "guided by some universal principles, which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places."

It seems as if there must be some distinct principle of unity in these ideas which connect so uniformly with each

[28] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 407-8.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 397-8, 408.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 545. Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 121.
[31] *Treatise*, pp. 318-9. It was characteristic of Locke to note the *diversity* instead of the community of languages, for if complex ideas are due to acts of voluntary thinking, the products will be diverse and the correspondence between languages defective. Hume shows a fine historical sense—neither the thought nor the language is the work of a deliberative intelligence in man.

other in complex ideas. Yet none ever appears. Such a universal "bond of union" would have to be an "inseparable connection," which is obviously impossible, because our appreciation of the fact of "union" implies at the same time a recognition of the ideas as distinct existences that are separable from each other. The only genuinely invariable connections are those of logic, where it is quite impossible to think of the one idea without the other: anything other than the given connection proves to be unthinkable. But here we may always conceive what is now joined together to exist quite otherwise. These ideas are really independent of each other. Our uniformly complex ideas have no foundation in reason, therefore, but in imagination. And we must now examine this imagination.

In those cases where complex ideas regularly form themselves in our mind, we are impelled to seek some "principle" of their unity. It is not a quality common to the ideas, for we cannot discern any. It is nothing we can perceive at all in the ideas. All that we observe is the uniform coming-together of these ideas in our thought. The real factor must be, then, a tendency in thought, "a gentle force, which commonly prevails." The guiding principle of the connections of ideas is really our own "nature in a manner pointing out to every one those simple ideas, which are most proper to be united in a complex one."

The working of this human nature has its own distinctive laws. If we scrutinise the various conceptions commonly formed in our minds, we notice certain general features in them. "The qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner conveyed from one idea to another, are three, viz., *resemblance*, *contiguity* in time or place, and *cause* and *effect*." These "qualities" give no explanation of the phenomena; they simply describe the occasions on which we notice such associations as accomplished facts. It is apparent that our ideas do "naturally introduce" each other when they resemble each other. Nor is it in the least unlikely that our

imagination would follow the habits of our senses which regularly pass from one point of space or time to a contiguous one. "As to the connection, that is made by the relation of *cause and effect*, we shall have occasion afterwards to examine it to the bottom, and therefore shall not at present insist upon it. 'Tis sufficient to observe, that there is no relation, which produces a stronger connection in the fancy, and makes one idea more readily recall another, than the relation of cause and effect betwixt their objects." From this it appears, moreover, that resemblance, contiguity, and causation are not really "qualities," except in a very loose sense of the term: they are "relations." When Hume revised this section in the *Enquiry* he was careful to suppress the term "qualities." For it suggests perceivable data on the *basis* of which we unite our ideas. But association is precisely the case of a union among ideas where all ground in perception or reason is missing. Those relations which we call the "principles" are appreciated as we imagine the ideas in their connection. We know them contemporaneously with our giving of the objects their relation in thought. They are not represented to us in the beginning. They are not the foundation of our inference. Indeed, they are more truly its outcome. For Locke had declared that the mind makes relations—and Hume differs with Locke only in characterising the mind's operation as a "natural" one and not deliberate or voluntary.[32] The imagination is determined to connect ideas, and its activity in doing so makes the order of nature not simply a world in time and space but a world definitely related in all its parts. If we are minded, therefore, to look for any "causes" of association, we discover "they are mostly unknown, and must be resolved into *original* qualities of human nature, which I pretend not to explain."

Another bit of evidence to show that resemblance, contiguity, and causation do not serve as discernible grounds

[32] *Essay*, Book II, chap. xxv, secs. 1, 5. Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 18; and Meinong, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 27, 32.

for our conception of the complex ideas is the fact that two ideas may be related to each other through an intermediate idea which is differently related to both of them. The first may resemble the second, which in turn may be contiguous with a third, so that the last is somehow related to the first. The bond it is impossible to specify in terms of perception. The unity of the connection lies wholly in the mind which has imagined them in that natural but devious way. The relation is *established* by the act of mind. And no "common quality" in the *things* thus related is there to guide the mind in its inference.

Our science of mind is thus on the same level with the science of physical nature. Like Newton, we can formulate only the empirical "principles" of the gravitation we observe in our ideas, without pretending to lay bare the ultimate nature of that force or power. "Here is a kind of *attraction*, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to show itself in as many and as various forms."[33]

The "effects" are simply the whole range of conceptions uniformly arising in the thinking of all men. "Amongst the effects of this union or association of ideas, there are none more remarkable, than those complex ideas, which are the common subjects of our thoughts and reasoning, and generally arise from some principle of union among our simple ideas. These complex ideas may be divided into *relations*, *modes* and *substances*." Besides them there are "*general*" ideas which originate from the same source.

If the human imagination is determined by "nature" to connect ideas with each other in certain determinate ways, then the relations, of which we cannot but be sensible in our perceiving those ideas together, are themselves "natural." They owe nothing to human artifice. We do not select a certain circumstance in respect to which we compare the ideas and discover their relation. According to

[33] Cf. Thomsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-4, 374.

Locke all relations are consciously established by the mind. The unity of the objects is an "arbitrary" one. The mind institutes comparisons, combines, and discriminates as it pleases. With every distinct act it produces a different relation. There can be as many relations as the mind chooses to discover through its inventions. But Hume sees no possibility of a "science" in such indefinitely varied mental activity. It is quite possible, on the contrary, to classify the various kinds of relation and reduce their number to seven specific types: resemblance, identity, spatial and temporal position, quantity or number, degrees of quality, contrariety, and cause and effect. Philosophers never make use of any other relations. Even "difference" is no relation, but the absence of some special relation we expect. Thus all those seven relations are "philosophical," that is, the ideas philosophers employ in their reasoning. But there are three of these relations which philosophers are not at liberty to ignore and which all persons use in common life. They are resemblance, contiguity in time and place, and cause and effect. We can no more avoid perceiving things in their aspect of similarity, contiguity, or causal relation with each other than we can their sensible qualities. We are possessed of these conceptions without taking thought. We consider that they are in every case "true relations," and not merely passing connections in our thought for which we ourselves are privately accountable. We treat them as actually representing what is there in nature.[34] And all this is so because we are determined to conceive them "by nature," not by our own sweet will.

There are "things" in nature, too, just as there are true relations. Whenever the qualities we perceive are "closely and inseparably connected by the relations of contiguity and causation" we have what we call a "substance." Our idea of substance depends, therefore, upon our conceiving the data of perception in terms of those relations. We cannot trace the idea to any original and simple im-

[34] Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

pression. It is itself far from being a simple idea—it is an idea of something wherein certain qualities are naturally united with each other. "We have, therefore, no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it."[35] These qualities are "united by the imagination." Yet nothing in their appearance seems to form a ground for this union. Our idea of gold, for example, may include at first the yellow color, weight, malleability, and fusibility, but when we learn of its being soluble in *aqua regia*, we promptly conceive that quality with the original group—and conversely, we may think certain qualities away without losing our idea of the substance. So long as the relations of contiguity and causation are maintained in our imagination we consider the thing a true, single substance. In fact, the units of reality about which we constantly think are grounded in an unwitting imagination which serves the purpose of life.

Philosophers attempt to establish our conceptions of real things by reason. They desire an exact idea of substance. They set up "an unknown *something*" in which

[35] Hume's meaning in this section on Substance is scarcely to be understood without Locke's statement of the case (Book II, chap. xxiii, sec. 1). "*Ideas of Substances, how made*—The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas conveyed in by the senses, as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on its own operations, takes notice also that a certain number of these simple ideas *go constantly together;* which being *presumed* to belong to one thing, and words being suited to common apprehensions and made use of for quick dispatch, are called, *so united in one subject, by one name;* which, by inadvertency, we are apt afterward to talk of and consider as one simple idea, which indeed is a *complication of many ideas together*: because, as I have said, not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves *to suppose some substratum* wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result; which therefore we call substance." [Italics in text mine.] Hume considers the constant going-together of ideas no mere accident of experience but witness to a regular operation of our imagination. Their unity is thus "natural." But that "presumption" of our common human nature is extended further by the philosophical "supposition" of a single, unchanging substratum and source of the qualities of a natural thing. This philosophical adventure Hume repudiates. Locke does so, too, in this passage, though elsewhere he is very partial to "substance."

the various related qualities are said to inhere, the subject of the attributes and something quite distinct from all of them. This is the ultimately real thing. It is a fixed and unalterable reality. But this "fiction" of their reasoning is only a dubious "philosophical" substance and not substance as we commonly know it.

Hume has nothing to say about "modes," except that they are ideas formed of simple ideas without a sufficient relation in our mind to make us conceive of them as distinctly real things. They are not arbitrarily produced, however, since they owe their existence to the same determinate imagination of mankind. They are instances of "association." But they have not been so abused by philosophers as substances and relations and have given occasion to no great errors, so that Hume finds them of little importance in his theory of knowledge. Nevertheless they must be acknowledged as real aspects of the world we naïvely perceive.

A more important phase of human understanding now presents itself—our thinking in terms of universals. Every idea is a particular quality or thing, yet we conceive general things or kinds to be truly existing in nature. Now we have no simple ideas of any *abstract* existence. Our general conceptions must arise, therefore, from the obvious resemblance that holds between all the things we characterise as being *of* the same kind. The "universal" thus comes into our thinking in a way analogous to that of "substance." It is a collection of particulars related in terms of similarity, whereas a substance is one of relation in terms of contiguity and causation. We have no distinct idea of a substance apart from the qualities whose union in the imagination composes it; we have no idea of a universal as an entity separate or abstracted from the individuals whose unity in the imagination makes it what it is. The meaning of a substance is given in the whole set of qualities of which it consists. The connotation of a universal is re-

vealed only in the various related particulars which it denotes. What deceives us in both cases is the artificial fixity of the words we employ to designate these imaginative unities, for we apply the same word to every individual of a kind and we come to treat the universal itself as an independent, unalterable, and absolute reality in its own right. There is a true universality in the world we perceive, even as there are true relations and real substances, but we are always liable to the philosophers' besetting sin of taking words for things and conceiving things in the image of words. So Berkeley was happy in his two-fold discovery, that we perceive nothing as an abstraction and that we perceive a world of real generality, real, at least, for the purposes of life.

When Hume finished the *Treatise* he felt that his description of the formation and employment of general ideas had not been sufficiently clear, and consequently, that his doctrine of association itself would be misunderstood. He then offered, in an *Appendix*, a further analysis of the whole situation.

The difficulty centers about the process of thinking ideas in some special unity and connection when we cannot perceive a distinct unifying quality among them. It is almost impossible for us to conceive how such an operation can take place without supposing a ground in the observable data of perception. But that is just the paradoxical nature of this whole type of the mind's fundamental activities. Our imagination assimilates by nature. So it is not "necessary, that *the point* or *circumstance of resemblance* [in the perceptions] should be *distinct* or *separable* from that in which they differ. Blue and green are different simple ideas, but are *more resembling* than blue and scarlet; though their perfect simplicity excludes all possibility of separation or distinction. 'Tis the same case with particular sounds, and tastes and smells. These admit of *infinite resemblances* upon the general appearance and comparison, without *having any common circumstance* the

same."[36] There is, then, no discerned "common circumstance" or "point" of similarity to *make* our mind collect precisely the ideas it does envisage as forming a single kind. The resemblances are infinite in degree and number. And a degree of resemblance cannot itself be represented to us as a quality distinct from the resembling qualities. Moreover, the illustration from sounds, tastes, and smells will correct our usual tendency to imagine the resemblance itself between things in visual terms—we can notice likeness, and degrees of it, in those other sensations without perceiving a common element. Thus, whenever we have conceived several things together, we may appreciate their resemblance to each other. But the gathering-in of the ideas is itself no act of conscious discernment, for it is the very condition of whatever deliberate comparison and discrimination we are able, afterwards, to make. This is the case in every "association of ideas."

The exact place where Hume desired us to read this additional explanation, is after this statement: "When we have found a resemblance among several objects." What underlies the finding of such resemblance is the assimilative tendency of the mind itself, and nothing in the perceived things. Having thus taken things to be one in kind, so that we recognise their essential resemblance to each other, we require one further condition before we can form a general idea important enough to be fixed in language—the objects perceived must "often occur to us." There are "infinite resemblances" possible, because the mind is always giving things relation to each other in so far as they will sustain the connection. But not all of these general ideas have lasting value. Therefore, the things *frequently* brought to our attention in life are the only ones we find it necessary to mark by means of language. From this it follows, that the "general ideas" of our thinking are really confirmed "customs."

[36] *Treatise*, p. 328. Italics mine.

"After we have acquired a custom of this kind, the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions. But as the same word is supposed to have been frequently applied to other individuals, that are different in many respects from that idea, which is immediately present to the mind; the word not being able to revive the idea of all these individuals, but only touches the soul, if I may be allowed so to speak, and revives that custom, which we have acquired by surveying them. They are not really and in fact present to the mind, but only in power; nor do we draw them all out distinctly in the imagination, but keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them, as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity. The word raises up an individual idea, along with a certain custom; and that custom produces any other individual one, for which we may have occasion. . . . For this is one of the most extraordinary circumstances in the present affair, that after the mind has produced an individual idea, upon which we [proceed to] reason, the attendant custom, revived by the general or abstract term, readily suggests any other individual, if by chance we form any reasoning, that agrees not with it. . . . Nay so entire is the custom, that the very same idea may be annexed to several different words, and may be employed in different reasonings, without any danger of mistake. . . . All these terms, therefore, are in this case attended with the same idea; but as they are wont to be applied in a greater or lesser compass, they excite their particular habits, and thereby keep the mind in a readiness to observe, that no conclusion be formed contrary to any ideas, which are usually comprised under them."

This "habit" is the only representative, in the mind, of those ideas whose collection makes up a general kind of existence. It is itself no idea. It is an active disposition, ready to select and reject the particular ideas which it

means or does not mean. It does this in accordance with the experience which has been a condition of its existence along with the impulsive nature of the mind itself. Here is one of the novelties of the *Treatise*. Hume speaks of "the hypothesis I have proposed" and of a "new system" on this subject of general ideas.

There are in the mind, then, a certain number of habits of thought, each of them representing whole sets of particular ideas that have unity with each other despite their obvious differences. These habits are "acquired" in the course of experience. They depend upon the original impulse of the mind itself to assimilate everything to everything else and they depend, also, upon the actual repetition of events in nature. The *usual* relations are those that really *determine* our thinking. They are the ones we denote in language. This naming, too, is not merely an artificial convention, but a custom or natural impulse guided by common experience, since no man forms his own individual language. When such customs of the mind exist we need only hear a general term to think of some particular idea suited to the context of our thought or conversation. The term touches off a very active disposition in the mind itself and this disposition then exhibits a remarkable power of discrimination, calling up to definite representation whatever is most relevant to the occasion. The custom is thus something potential, fraught with activity, prompt to suggest ideas. It cannot itself be an idea present to the mind but it really is the representative *within* the mind itself, of all the ideas of our experience that have taken on relation with each other—and it is a representation not "inert" but very active, through our imagination, in all discourse of the mind. Thus a more wonderful factor than the "abstract" idea has discovered itself in our common process of thinking by the use of general terms. Our human understanding advances in knowledge only by virtue of mental habits or dispositions that are really a second nature in us.

This "hypothesis I have proposed concerning abstract ideas, so contrary to that, which has hitherto prevailed in philosophy" is a "new system" not easy to comprehend at first sight. Like other hypotheses it leads us to "ultimate causes of our mental actions." To explain these original activities of human nature is more than we should demand of "experimental philosophy." But if we can cite analogous instances we may establish, at least, the concrete reality of these mental habits.

The difficulty in Hume's thought comes from the ambiguity of the term "custom" in its application both to the forming of a general conception and to its designation in language. Only the usual things of our experience are so named. The choice of name is, further, a matter of mere usage. Consequently we may suppose, here, that we get the habit, for no reason whatsoever, of calling several distinct things by the same name because they often reappear in our lives, and that we think of some one of these in a purely mechanical way upon hearing the term thereafter.[37] Now it is plainly Hume's meaning, especially in view of his statement in the Appendix, to attribute the collection

[37] A. Meinong insisted that Hume was not clear in his treatment of *Abstract Ideas* and that his doctrine of association of ideas was a "fundamental error" (*Hume-Studien, Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 1914, J. Barth, Leipzig, Vol. I, pp. 53-4, 61). The point of Meinong's criticism is directed against the "custom." It is well presented by G. Dawes Hicks in *The Philosophical Researches of Meinong*, article in *Mind*, N.S. 121, Jan. 1922, p. 9: "A disposition to revive the ideas in question must, however, surely have been previously there, if eventually, through the aid of the word, they are reproducible." Now this is what Hume seems to have meant himself. The disposition is produced by association prior to the frequent designation (by means of a word) of the things thus associated. Hume's confusion is one merely of language or expression, as he himself admits in his own criticism of the *Treatise*. But he never repudiates his "principle," the doctrine of association as a phenomenon of the imagination, and he retains the position (in the *Enquiry*). Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 68 and note.

It seems to me that S. Alexander has seized upon the true meaning of Hume when he says: "The universal is nowhere and nowhen in particular but anywhere and anywhen, and in Hume's language is in readiness to start into being (which is existence) when the occasion calls." And this universal subsists as a "mental disposition." (*Space, Time and Deity*, Macmillan, London, 1920, Vol. I, pp. 222-3.)

of different things under a general term *primarily* to the imagination, and to usage, merely the *remarking* of their unity. There are many more universals possible for thought than we find it useful to think about often and to denote in words. Our procedure in the employment of language is dictated largely by the needs of our practical life, so that the relations of what commonly appears in our life will alone be emphasised and preserved in *habits* of our mind. Then these factors called "habits" exhibit themselves as very fertile activities, selecting and rejecting the new ideas for the situation—a genial capacity which is exactly what we should expect if they were really forms of imagination. To bring out precisely this phase of the matter, therefore, Hume describes some analogies in our common experience.

We can think of numbers larger than we can possibly visualise. Ordinarily we are able to represent conveniently, say, ten units in definite images. We cannot imagine thousands and their many multiplications. What we actually seem to do is imagine the decimal and, having in mind the "power of producing" number from given units, we easily conceive those unimaginably large numbers.[38] We possess a directing habit of mathematical thought.

If we have once learned a poem we can recall it word for word, merely upon thinking of the first word. When we commence our recitation we have only one single definite image. All the remainder of the poem is in mind, disposed in due order as a ready habit.

Again, when we are engaged in a process of reasoning we employ terms like "church," "government," etc., without thinking in full detail of what we mean, but attending chiefly to the word-image. The word refers to a very "complex idea." Apparently that idea has its representative in a certain watchful habit of mind, for we may avoid talking nonsense about what is meant and we clearly perceive any-

[38] Cf. Fénelon, *Traité*, etc., p. 61.

thing contrary to it. The custom serves us quite as well as any elaborate system of logical relations.

As a final instance we must observe the quick sagacity of all our thought by means of general terms. "Nothing is more admirable, than the readiness, with which the imagination suggests its ideas, and presents them at the very instant, in which they become necessary or useful. The fancy runs from one end of the universe to the other in collecting those ideas, which belong to any subject. One would think the whole intellectual world of ideas was at once subjected to our view, and that we did nothing but pick out such as were most proper for our purpose. There may not, however, be any present, beside those very ideas [themselves], that are thus collected by a kind of magical faculty in the soul, which, though it be always most perfect in the greatest geniuses, and is properly what we call a genius, is, however, inexplicable by the utmost efforts of human understanding."

One of the additional merits of this system, which makes universals exist as habits of imagination, is that it explains an act of mind which Berkeley had been obliged to acknowledge without explaining its possibility. Philosophers had always believed that they were able to make a "distinction of reason" where none was obvious. In other words, they considered certain qualities or modes of existence in abstraction from the other features of the concrete object. And Berkeley himself averred: "To be plain, I own myself able to abstract in one sense, as when I consider some particular parts or qualities separated from others"[39] But that considering is not, however, the perceiving of an "abstract *idea*." Our perception must always be something particular. How then, are we able to think abstractly in this fashion? Berkeley never tells us. We certainly cannot distinguish any separate idea, and yet

[39] *Principles*, sec. 10, p. 242, and p. 249 (sec. 16, sentence added in 2nd ed.).

we do distinguish between certain parts or qualities of our particular idea, excluding other circumstances. Now Hume has already noted the selective and discriminating nature of the mind's own habits—the solution he discerns is that we make such "distinctions of reason" on the strength of the *distinct habits* in the mind. To take an example: we may at one time observe a globe of white marble and then, later, a globe of black marble and a cube of white marble. Immediately "we find two separate resemblances." We "find" such relations in the way Hume describes in the Appendix; namely, after acts of assimilation made without discernment of any ground of unity and connection. Having once noticed two separate relations of likeness for each one of these objects, we distinguish the circumstances in which they are severally alike as separate features in the objects.[40] And if we are permitted, by the order of events, a frequent practice in this, we conceive very distinctly the aspects of "color" and "figure." Of course we perceive them always together, for no color exists except in a body extending in some definite space and no such figure in space ever presents itself devoid of color. Yet we can *treat* the "figure" or the "color" separately, in thought and conversation. To consider only the "figure" of the white sphere of marble we imagine the whole set of qualities "but tacitly carry our eye to its resemblance with the globe of black marble." That is to say, we have in mind its particular relation to the other globe as something distinct from its other particular relation with the white cube. The diversity of relations between these several objects is thus essential to our distinguishing the color and figure. And so "we accompany our ideas with a kind of reflection" of which we are quite unaware, because it is an act of habit and not deliberate thought. It was the semblance to reflective thought that betrayed Locke and others into sup-

[40] Hedvall brings this out by distinguishing between the instinctive, *generalising* abstraction and the *isolating* abstraction, the former being prior to the latter.—*Op. cit.*, pp. 81-3.

posing that these distinctions of reason are really *acts* of reason. In point of fact they have their source in the imagination, like all the primary activities of the human mind.

What the "common people" perceive as their world is very much more than what we can discover in their "perceptions." Unwittingly they unite what they remember with what they perceive before them at the moment and even with what they think is going to be present. They treat all these items as realities in a "system." They spread that order of existences out in space and time. They attribute definite relations to them, relations of resemblance, contiguity in space and time, and cause and effect. Among these related items they envisage certain special units which they know as "things" or "substances," which exist as collections of qualities that permit of union in terms of contiguity and causation. Other things resemble each other constantly and they come to be considered as of one general kind. And still others bear several different resemblances to each other so that special qualities or aspects not perceptibly distinct come, nevertheless, to be distinguished and treated as separate existences. So the naïve view of mankind is the outcome of many processes of mind giving unity and distinction and system to their perceptions.[41]

If we would explain the human understanding, then, we must suppose in it some orderly principle. Now reason had long been considered the source of the ideas of relation, substance, and generality which are the basis upon which all knowledge builds and extends itself. But there seems to be no rational ground for our causal inference, and none, as Berkeley proved, for our general concepts. Locke himself had thrown some doubt upon the rationality of the process by which we conceive "substance," and

[41] Cf. Riehl, *Zur Einführung*, etc., pp. 99 *ff;* A. D. Lindsay, Introduction to Everyman Edition of the *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. xi.

Berkeley despatched "matter." Even the phrase "distinction of reason" seems now a misnomer. And every description of the way in which mankind reaches these essential "complex ideas" ascribes to the simple man a remarkably subtle and reflective mind—one too much like the philosophers' own minds to seem true to life. We must turn, then, to the activity of the human imagination for light upon our common knowledge of the world.

This imagination is an orderly affair. Every case of a "complex idea" is analysable into one or more relations. A "general idea" is a particular idea perceived with its resemblance to a whole set of other particulars. A "substance" is a collection of particulars in their relations of spatial and temporal contiguity and causation. The substantial aspects of our world are based upon the interconnections of what we perceive. All these complexities spring from the taking of the things we perceive in some one or more of these relations. They are the "natural relations," true for nature because originating in that portion of nature which we call the human being. Things really exist in these relations. The relations are as real as the qualities for which they hold. They are fundamental to whatever unity and connection these qualities assume in our minds, and even to the distinguishing of these qualities from each other as separable things. They are thus the essential type of every "association of ideas" in the imagination.

We are not to forget, however, that this imagination has a variable character as well as one that is uniform in all men and at all times and places. It is always free to make some connections and envisage some unities in thought that are not "natural" and may even become spurious or fictitious and useless. We are possessed of the natural relations and the ideas of substance and generality without taking thought. The philosophers as well as the rest of mankind think only because they are natively determined to do so in certain definite ways. They live in the common-sense world and accept without question the usual

connections and unities and the language by which men have found themselves helped. But philosophers are people who also try to think for themselves. They start with the common notions and scrutinise them for more unity and coherence. They make arbitrary comparisons, discriminations, abstractions, and constructions of thought, deliberately attempting to widen and deepen the superficial wisdom of the ordinary man. Yet so engrossed are they in their high enterprise that they fail to see the need, if they compare with a purpose in view, of presupposing some natural relations originally between the objects which they have in mind—for they first take the objects together in some given connection and then discern in them some possible ground for a further comparison, which they thereupon institute. This primary collecting of ideas into unities is unwitting and natural. It is an impulse of the human imagination. Hence the philosophic comparison is only a supervening activity of the mind, like philosophic distinctions. Consequently we must speak of a "philosophical relation" when we refer to a connection of thought which is *arbitrarily* produced by the mind. There is also "philosophical substance." And the "abstract idea" is a kindred philosophical notion. These products of the imagination are ventures of the mind beyond common sense, and they involve us in all sorts of perplexities and doubts. For the purposes of life our various natural relations, things, substances, general ideas, and separate or distinct aspects of objects are all true—but the notions we have from this too free ranging of thought are the source of most human illusions and errors.

Hume is only proposing his theory, however, to account for true knowledge and not for error. To this end his insistence upon the factor of "custom" is actually a positive contribution to the argument. The imagination is impulsive in certain general ways. It is impelled to assimilate things all the time, taking everything in some unity or connection with everything else. In this it is really *a priori*.

This impulse it does not derive from experience but from the very nature of the human mind. Still, we do not actually perceive our world completely related in every respect, in its resemblance, contiguity, or causality. Our knowledge is of quite definite relations excluding certain other relations. This is due to the conditions of our experience. The course of nature is such that certain objects have a constant conjunction in time and space with each other, and others do not—these junctures of events, then, are the ones we are determined to look for in the future.[42] Our impulse to see things in causal relations has become a habit of mind for a certain specific set of objects. Likewise, other objects often appear to us bearing a resemblance to each other in some respect—this fixes our impulse upon these special objects and henceforth we are determined to conceive these resembling things as of one kind or general sort. Thus the imagination is never solely moved by original human nature but always by the habits which it has developed through the specific experience of life. These habits of mind represent the working relations of our human existence. And the body of knowledge comprising them is presumably true because it is already verified in life and can be put to still further tests of experience.

Whenever we proceed to enlarge our knowledge or to reason about matters, we are guided in our thought by these dispositions acquired through our experience. They represent, as we have seen, the relations in thought which have been confirmed by the course of nature. In "habits" all relations have their real enduring place. It is a place and a function which Berkeley could not ascribe to them because he distinguished nothing intermediate between the inert ideas we perceive and the pure agent we know ourselves to be as we perceive ideas. For Hume, the mind that we know is never a pure agent expressing solely its own

[42] Cf. Riehl, *op. cit.*, p. 98: "Wie Gewohnheit entsteht wissen wir nicht und ihre letzte Ursache brauchen wir nicht zu kennen; dasz sie in folge der Wiederholung entsteht, erfahren wir."

nature—it is one whose activities have been developed and made definite by its intercourse with nature, a mind determined by habits acquired through experience. And these habits serve us as well as any luminous "insight" into the connections of things. Moreover, their very operation comes to be reflected in the views we have of things. We shall learn, later, that we "*feel* a connection or determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another."[43] The "necessity" we are aware of in causal reasoning is a feeling of such determination. Moreover, the peculiar quality of which we are conscious in the "identity" of an object or of our own personal existence is a feeling of the ready transition in our thought. And further, whenever we are thus moved by the very custom of our mind to conceive the existence of something remote from our presence we have a unique sentiment which we call "belief." All these feelings reflect the quality of our mental processes in our actual perception of reality. Hume has provided for them in his division of the contents of the mind: they constitute "impressions of reflection" and are elements which are as inescapable as the more obvious impressions of that same denomination, our emotions and passions. Thus human knowledge is quite as much a matter of feeling as of ideas. It is a phase of mind somewhat comparable with sentiment and conduct. And the highest recommendation of our new theory of the human understanding is precisely this, that the common people are now described as thinking in a way which fits in with their usual ways of feeling and acting. "Custom" is, in all our life, a second nature, masking from us the very genius of our human imagination which makes it possible and which may at times run beyond the guidance of experience into the dangerous fancies of philosophy.

[43] *Treatise*, Vol. I, Appendix, p. 559. Berkeley had argued that the disposition of the eyes in vision serves to give us our notion of the external and distant. *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, sec. 16, and *The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, secs. 28-31.

CHAPTER FIVE

Space, Time, and Reality

THOUGH the chief topic of the *Treatise* is Causation, we need a certain preparation for this new doctrine. It is not easy to believe that the necessity we attribute to the relation between cause and effect depends upon the manner of our thinking, and is itself actually the feeling of determination by our habits of thought, reflected into our very perception of what is before us. But we have already had a glimpse of something quite analogous, which Hume now proceeds to investigate. We perceive impressions directly and perceive them again, represented in the form of ideas —in so simple an experience we are, at least, aware of time, that is, of the past we remember, and the present, and the future which we fancy. In virtue of our memory and imagination, as well as sensation, all three being quite distinct activities of the mind, we perceive a system of reality extending before us in time. Apparently the manner in which we perceive has some bearing on the character of our world. There will thus be something in our common "idea" of time, and likewise that of space, which cannot be traced to any distinct, particular, simple impression, but which must be ascribed to the mind in its perception. We are to study, then, the naïve view of time and space, to see how intimately the mind's own nature enters into these most obvious characters of reality.

There is another reason for taking up the ideas of time and space before we deal with that of cause. Locke had made the idea of Power a "simple idea" given us directly by nature. He enumerated it along with others such as Unity, Space, Time, and Existence or External Reality.[1] But Berkeley had raised "difficulties" about the simplicity

[1] *Essay*, Book II, chaps. II-VII; chap. XIII, sec. 2; chap. XVI, sec. 1; chap. XXI, sec. 4. Locke himself eliminated Infinity as a simple idea,—chap. XVIII.

of every one of these ideas. He had shown that the externality is a supposition of the mind, not a direct deliverance of the senses, as a simple idea ought to be. Berkeley's religious interest kept his attention upon this particular notion of a reality beyond our perception, because it seemed to him the foundation of all "materialism." Still, he did take note of certain other things which were of some importance for "natural philosophy and mathematics." "Time, place, and motion, taken in particular or concrete, are what everybody knows; but, having passed through the hands of a metaphysician, they become too abstract and fine to be apprehended by men of ordinary sense."[2] The same is true of unity and infinity. Consequently, most of these "simple ideas" of Locke's philosophy turn out, upon examination, to be "abstract ideas." They are not simple ideas at all. Yet one of these notions Berkeley himself clung to still, as immune from all such criticism, the sense of a conscious agency or activity. This was no spurious abstraction of the metaphysicians but a reality known completely and truly in every act of the conscious mind. But "activity," "agency," "power,"—these are merely the same conceptions as "cause" or "necessity," which Hume has discovered to be no simple datum of perception. This idea must go the same way with space, time, external existence, and number. It is to be given a new meaning corresponding to its actual nature. To prepare for the "true definition" of cause, we should study very carefully what we mean by space and time.[3]

Several famous thinkers had already attacked the prevalent notions of space and time. Just five years after the appearance of Berkeley's *Principles* there was a lively controversy between Leibnitz and Samuel Clarke, on the absolute space, time, and motion of Newton's *Principia.* Clarke published their letters, in 1717, after the death of

[2] *Principles,* sec. 97.
[3] Hedvall suggests that space and time are discussed here because they are the *most general relations. Op. cit.,* p. 92.

Leibnitz. In order to give the reader as much light as possible upon the position of Leibnitz he included, in an Appendix, certain quotations from the *Theodicée*. He indicated, too, in the title, the significance of the whole discussion for natural religion as well as natural science. The youthful Hume, who was so interested in arguments relating to natural religion, would surely have perused this document. He would have been pleased, certainly, to see a man of great reputation measure wits with the reverend doctor whose triumphant "demonstration" of the necessity of a cause for every event he himself had already proved to be "fallacious and sophistical."[4] If his own *Dialogues* are autobiographical, they show him conversant, thus early, with the thought of Leibnitz. Besides, Leibnitz had been much vaunted by Pierre Bayle who spoke of him as "one of the greatest wits of Europe," and Hume was a devoted reader of Bayle. No one who followed the events of the intellectual world could miss the figure of Leibnitz, for his partisans and those of Newton had stirred Europe with opposing claims for the precedence of their heroes in the discovery of the calculus. Perhaps this very feature accounts for Hume's silence about Leibnitz in the *Treatise*. It ill behooved a young author, proclaiming a revolution in knowledge, and offering a paradox which would shock the world, to appeal to the authority of Leibnitz when writing for an English public already sensitive on behalf of its Newton. Hume was ever anxious to avoid partisan controversy. Moreover, he admired both thinkers. Thus he called his own theory of association of ideas a parallel to Newton's theory of gravitation in the physical world, and again, in the *Enquiry*, he spoke of the association as a "pre-established harmony."[5] So it seems altogether likely that

[4] Clarke's argument to demonstrate the necessity of a cause for every event was stated in these letters. It is usually overlooked that Hume must certainly have been acquainted with the ideas of Leibnitz. Cf. Compayré, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[5] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 321; *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 46. Cf. Bayle's dictionary article on *Rorarius*, note H, alluding to Leibnitz.

he was thoroughly acquainted with this book of the *Correspondence* between Leibnitz and Clarke. His own ideas about space and time imply a criticism of Newton and Locke not unlike that which Leibnitz himself had been quietly writing, unknown to his contemporaries, in the *Nouveaux Essais*.[6]

Leibnitz proposes "demonstrations against *real absolute space*, which is an *idol* of some modern Englishmen. . . . As for my own opinion, I have said more than once, that I hold *space* to be something *merely relative*, as *time* is; that I hold it to be an *order of coexistences*, as *time* is *an order of successions*. For *space* denotes, in terms of possibility, *an order* of things which exist at the same time, considered as existing *together*; without enquiring into their manner of existing. And when many things are seen *together*, one perceives *that order of things among themselves*."[7]

"The author [Clarke] contends, that *space* does not depend upon the *situation of bodies*. I answer: 'Tis true, it does not depend upon *such* or *such* a situation of bodies; but it is *that order*, which renders bodies capable of being situated, and by which they have a situation among themselves when they *exist together;* as *time* is *that order*, with respect to their *successive* position."[8]

"I [Leibnitz] will here show, *how* men come to form to themselves the notion of *space*. They consider that many things exist at once, and they observe in them a certain *order* of coexistence, according to which the relation of one thing to another is more or less simple. This order is their *situation* or distance. When it happens that one of those coexistent things changes its *relation* to a multitude of others, which do not change their relation among themselves; and that another thing, newly come, acquires the

[6] They were first published by Raspe in 1765.
[7] *Third Paper*, secs. 2, 4, pp. 55, 57. All italics in original.
[8] *Fourth Paper*, sec. 41, p. 113.

same relation to the others, as the former had; we then say, it is come into the *place* of the former; and this change we call a *motion* in that body, wherein is the immediate cause of the change. And though many, or even all the coexistent things, should change according to certain known rules of direction and swiftness; yet one may always determine the relation of situation, which every coexistent acquires with respect to every other coexistent; and even that relation, which any other coexistent would have to this, or which this would have to any other, if it had not changed, or if it had changed any otherwise. And supposing, or feigning, that among those coexistents, there is a sufficient number of them which have undergone no change; then we may say, that those which have such a *relation* to those fixed existents, as others had to them before, have now the same *place* which those others had. And that which comprehends *all those places*, is called *space*. Which shows, that in order to have an idea of *place*, and consequently of *space*, it is sufficient to consider these *relations*, and the rules of their changes, without needing to fancy any absolute reality *out of* the things whose situation we consider. . . . *Place* is that, which is the same in different moments to different existent things, when their *relations of coexistence* with certain other existents, which are supposed to continue fixed from one of those moments to the other, agree entirely together. And *fixed existents* are those, in which there has been no cause of any change of the *order* of their coexistence with others; or (which is the same thing) in which there has been no *motion*. Lastly, *space* is that which results from *places taken together*."[9]

"But the mind not contented with an agreement [between the 'relations of coexistence' at different times], looks for an identity, for something that should be truly the same; and conceives it as being extrinsic to the subjects [in our modern sense, the *objects*]: and this is what we

[9] *Fifth Paper*, sec. 47, pp. 195 *ff*.

here call *place* and *space*. But this can only be an ideal thing; containing a certain order, wherein the mind conceives the application of relations."[10]

"Lastly, I observe, that the traces of moveable bodies, which they leave sometimes upon the immoveable ones on which they are moved, have given men occasion to form in their imagination such an idea, as if some trace did still remain, even when there is nothing unmoved. But this is a mere ideal thing, and imports only, that *if there was any unmoved thing there, the trace might be marked out upon it*. And 'tis this analogy, which makes men fancy *places*, *traces*, and *spaces;* though these things consist only in the truth of *relations*, and not at all in any absolute reality."[11]

The idea of time is relative like that of space: "Whatever exists of time and of duration, perishes continually; and how can a thing exist eternally, which, (to speak exactly), does never exist at all? For how can a thing exist, whereof no part does ever exist? Nothing of time does ever exist, but instants; and an instant is not even itself a part of time. Whoever considers these observations, will easily apprehend that time can only be an ideal thing. And the analogy between time and space will easily make it appear that the one is as merely ideal as the other."[12]

Time and Space depend for their conception, then, upon the objects of perception: "I don't say that matter and space are the same thing. I only say, *there is no space, where there is no matter;* and that space in itself is not an absolute reality. Space and matter differ, as time and motion. However, these things, though different, are *inseparable*."[13]

Serious consequences for natural science follow: "I maintain that there is *no vacuum* at all."[14] "The same reason, which shows that *extramundane* space is *imaginary*,

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 201.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[12] *Ibid.*, sec. 49, pp. 207-9.
[13] *Ibid.*, sec. 62, p. 223.
[14] *Second Paper*, sec. 2, p. 23.

proves that *all empty space* is an *imaginary* thing; for they differ only as greater and less."[15] "I have demonstrated, that *space* is nothing else but an *order* of the existence of things, observed as existing together; and therefore the fiction of a material finite universe, moving forward in an empty infinite space, cannot be admitted. It is altogether unreasonable and *impracticable*. For, besides that there is *no real space* out of the material universe; such an action would be without any design in it: it would be working without doing anything, *agendo nihil agere*. There would happen *no change*, which could be observed by any person whatsoever. These are imaginations of *philosophers who have incomplete notions*, who make space an absolute reality. Mere mathematicians, who are only taken up with the conceits of imagination, are apt to forge such notions; but they are destroyed by superior reasons. . . . Since *space* in itself is an *ideal* thing, like time; space *out of the world* must needs be imaginary, as the schoolmen themselves have acknowledged. The case is the same with empty space *within* the world, which I take also to be imaginary, for the reasons before alleged. . . . The *parts* of *time* or *place*, considered *in themselves*, are *ideal* things; and therefore they perfectly resemble one another, like two *abstract units*. But it is not so with two *concrete ones*, or with two *real times* or two *spaces filled up*, that is, truly *actual*."[16]

This objection to Clarke's abstract views of time and space was pressed vigorously by another celebrated writer of the age, the Irishman, John Toland (1669-1722). At the very time (1703-4) when Leibnitz had been at work upon his study of Locke's *Essay*, Toland had been residing in Hanover and occasionally in Berlin, favored by the same courts that stood sponsor to Leibnitz. He had already published, in England, *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) and an *Apology* for himself. His "deism" had provoked

[15] *Fourth Paper*, sec. 7, p. 97.
[16] *Fifth Paper*, secs, 29, 33, 27, pp. 181, 183, 179.

Locke to make an explicit disavowal of him as a disciple, which had given rise, in turn, to an open discussion between Locke and Stillingfleet. It was at this juncture that Toland went abroad, to meet Leibnitz. The same year that Leibnitz finished his *Nouveaux Essais* (1704), Toland published his *Letters to Serena* (the daughter of the electress of Hanover and Queen of Prussia). These *Philosophical Letters* dealt with the origin and force of prejudices, the history of the dogma of the immortality of the soul among pagan peoples, the origin of idolatry, the system of Spinoza, and finally with the idea that motion is essential to matter. This last *Letter* was an attempt to refute Clarke's demonstration that the very conception of matter as endowed with motion is impossible. Toland made remarks about space, time, and motion quite in the manner of Leibnitz. His own theory was akin to Leibnitz's view of the nature of reality and the cosmos. It came to its most pronounced expression in *Pantheisticon* (1720), a book very offensive to the pious. It was a thought, indeed, like "Strato's atheism," that matter might be self-organising through the internal principles of its very nature. Hume would scarcely ignore the writings of this deist, Toland, who not only criticised Dr. Clarke but so hardily explored the possibilities of the naturalistic hypothesis.

The attacks of Toland and Leibnitz upon Clarke brought out the fact that space and time in the concrete are not what philosophers had pretended they were. Time and space do not present themselves as absolute realities. They have meaning only for particular objects in certain describable relations. Whenever we think of space we have in mind objects coexisting and when we are conscious of time we consider objects in succession. We do not *understand* the manner of the existence of objects in these two distinct ways. We simply find ourselves aware of certain relations of situation and naturally conceive a complete order of situation holding at different times and cir-

cumstances. At any one time we can determine the relative position of one object to another in terms of its relations at a former time. Thus we conceive space as an order which comprehends all the possible relations of place; and likewise time as an order of all possible relations of succession. The "order" cannot be imagined by itself. Yet philosophers have pretended so in their talk about a space where no material exists, a vacuum between matter, an "empty" space within which the universe moves, and a time before or after the existence of the world. They suppose that these orders of reality extend beyond the conditions under which alone they know them. The result is a purely abstract notion of space and time. These realities have so little actual character that the philosophers treat them like number, dividing both space and time into units, points and instants,—units which are not distinguishable from each other. Yet we know them both as quite distinctive features of the world. The philosophers have here, as well as elsewhere, ignored the ordinary aspects of reality to mankind.

Hume proposes a "system" of his own with regard to this subject of space and time. He has learned from the discussions of his predecessors that space and time have their reality as distinctive orders of relation. This implies that we have no simple idea of space or time *separate* from the particular objects which are in those orders. The "idea" we have of either of these orders is not an idea in the sense that it represents something which we can identify by itself in impression. All relations subsist in the mind as *dispositions* of the mind in its perception of particulars. Thus the orders of time and space must be orders of our own human apprehension which reflect themselves into our perception. In this respect our situation is analogous to that where we perceive the necessity of a causal connection in the world of objects.

Hume endeavors to establish that we have no idea of space or time in Berkeley's sense of the term and that we

miss the distinctive character of these realities in the abstract conceptions offered us by philosophers—consequently we must regard what is characteristic in them as derived from the mental disposition of our perceptions. We must acknowledge space and time to be inseparable from the material objects which we perceive, and relative to them. And this material reality we cannot, in turn, reduce to some abstract idea of an external or unknown something—it is the concrete color, touch, or other secondary quality of our perception.

The most general conception of space and time is that of their "infinite divisibility." This is supposed to be their fundamental character. Yet of infinity, it is commonly admitted, we "can never attain a full and adequate conception." Everything of which we have an idea is some determinate or finite thing. What, then, do we mean by "infinity"? We find by experience that many definite perceptions which are to all appearances quite irreducible, will disclose parts within their apparent wholeness, upon closer scrutiny. This makes us correct our initial view. So constantly does this happen that we come to regard nothing that is presented to us as incapable of such a division into parts. In other words, we imagine the correction of our immediate perceptions to extend beyond the limit of any actual sense perception.[17] Thus we conceive a reality corresponding to this presumption of our own imagination, namely, an extension in space, or a duration in time, which is a whole that consists of infinite parts. But this means that there is no real finite or *indivisible* extension, and even that there are no *definite* parts at all in space, because every so-called *minimum* point is further divisible. Thus the notion at which we arrive contradicts the naïve perception which it actually presupposes. For we can only

[17] Cf. Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Book III, *Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy*, Preface to the *System of the World*, London, 1803. Tr. W. Emerson, Rule 3, p. 161.

think of the infinite divisibility of all extension because we correct, *without eliminating*, a perception of some finite extension. If we make the essence of space to consist wholly in that infinity, we exclude the very possibility of a space existing with real parts that may be conceived to swell to form some larger extension or divide into smaller extensions. Somehow, then, our true definition of space and time must allow for these actual finite units with which we are all so familiar.

The finite units of space or time cannot be treated, however, as units of quantity. "Extension is always a number, according to the common sentiment of metaphysicians, and never resolves itself into any unit or indivisible quantity." Now number simply in itself has no real existence, from which it follows that space will have none. If space is essentially a quantitative thing, then, it is simply a quantity *of nothing*. Consequently "the unity, which can exist alone, and whose existence is necessary to that of all number, is of another kind, and must be perfectly indivisible, and incapable of being resolved into any lesser unity."

The case of time makes it even more apparent that space and time cannot be defined simply in terms of their infinite divisibility, for time loses its distinctive character in that very definition. " 'Tis a property inseparable from time, and which in a manner constitutes its essence, that each of its parts succeeds another, and that none of them, however contiguous, can ever be coexistent. . . . 'Tis certain then, that time, as it exists, must be composed of indivisible moments. For if in time we could never arrive at an end of division, and if each moment, as it succeeds another, were not perfectly single and indivisible, there would be an infinite number of coexistent moments, or parts of time; which I believe will be allowed to be an arrant contradiction." And since the infinite divisibility of time is involved in that of space its impossibility implies that of space. The "essence" of either space or time is not contained in that notion of infinite divisibility.

It is possible, then, that some kind of units will really exist in the space or time we know. This does not commit us, however, to the assertion of quantitative indivisibles. Indeed, if we define them in such terms we shall confront arguments which prove the impossibility of our deriving space and time from mere points and moments. Still, if we are not referring to number at all but to some other qualities of our perception, we are entertaining a quite possible hypothesis against which all "pretended demonstrations" are unavailing.[18]

These "other qualities of our ideas of space and time" we must now learn from our own experience. It does not seem as if we have any simple impression of either space or time. No special sensation conveys one or the other to us. Nor is there a distinct emotional impression to serve as the model for those ideas. All we can observe is, in the case of extension, "the impressions of colored points, disposed in a certain manner." The qualities necessary to the perception of space, then, are colors and the "manner of their appearance." Thus our idea of space simply represents the particular color qualities in an order of coexistence. Again, we find touch qualities likewise disposed in such order.[19] These tangible and visible qualities of objects constitute the *parts* or *units* of the order of existence we call space. They are really inseparable from the space we perceive—if they were not to exist in our perception we should never conceive of spatial reality at all.

Now it is the very diversity of these presented sense qualities that enables us to form an "abstract idea" of space as something conceivably separate from color and

[18] Hume is expressing the empirical attitude. Cf. Aristotle, *De Lineis Insecabilibus*, 969b; Cicero, *De Finibus*, Book I, chap. VI, sec. 20 (Loeb, p. 23); Locke, Book II, chap. XVII, especially sec. 12 *ff.*; chap. XXIX, sec. 16; Berkeley, *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 282-3, 327; Vol. III (*The Analyst*), p. 52.

[19] Cf. Locke, Book II, chap. IV; chap. XIII, sec. 2; Berkeley, *New Theory of Vision*, sec. 160, p. 205.

touch. "Suppose that in the extended object, or composition of colored points, from which we first received the idea of extension, the points were of a purple color; it follows, that in every repetition of that idea we would not only place the points in the same order with respect to each other, but also bestow on them that precise color, with which alone we are acquainted. But afterwards having experience of the other colors of violet, green, red, white, black, and of all the different compositions of these, and finding a resemblance in the disposition of colored points, of which they are composed, we omit the peculiarities of color, as far as possible, and found an abstract idea merely on that disposition of points, or manner of appearance, in which they agree. Nay even when the resemblance is carried beyond the objects of one sense, and the impressions of touch are found to be similar to those of sight in the disposition of their parts; this does not hinder the abstract idea from representing both, upon account of their resemblance." Thus we make a "distinction of reason," separating extension from the qualities defining it to us, and we form an abstract idea of that separate reality. But what we *represent* to ourselves in thinking of space is necessarily *the particular colored and tangible objects*—the rest is something not capable of representation, their *disposition*.

"As 'tis from the disposition of visible and tangible objects we receive the idea of space, so from the succession of ideas and impressions we form the idea of time, nor is it possible for time alone ever to make its appearance, or be taken notice of by the mind." All sensations and even internal feelings or emotions serve to define the reality of time to us.[20] Hence "time in its first appearance to the mind is always conjoined with a succession of changeable objects" or qualities of feeling. It is inseparable from them. Moreover it is not noticed "wherever we have no successive perceptions," that is, where the objects before

[20] Cf. Hutcheson, *Essay*, 1728, p. 3 n.

us exist without change. Such objects present us with only coexistent qualities which are not susceptible of a disposition in an order of succession. Time is simply the order of succession in the things of which we are definitely aware through sensation and feeling. The real *parts* or indivisible *units* of time are precisely those qualities of our sense and affective impressions which together constitute our naïve perception of time.

These particular qualities of sense and feeling are what make it possible for us to *conceive* of time as a universal aspect of our world. "The idea of time is not derived from a particular impression mixed up with others, and plainly distinguishable from them; but arises altogether from the manner, in which impressions appear to the mind, without making one of the number. Five notes played on a flute give us the impression and idea of time; though time be not a sixth impression, . . . which the mind by reflection finds in itself . . . it only takes notice of the *manner*, in which the different sounds make their appearance; and that [manner] it may afterwards consider without considering these particular sounds, but may conjoin it with any other objects." The experience we have of this mode of the existence of things in their different circumstances enables us to distinguish the order of succession from the particular items that are thus disposed and to conceive this order in abstraction from them. Thus we come to have our "abstract idea" of time.

Throughout this study of the qualities of space and time which really define those realities to us Hume has been the "anatomist" of our perceptions. He has analyzed them into definite qualities of color, or touch, or sound,—many diverse qualities. In the colors and perceptions of touch he finds a spatial disposition; in the whole variety of qualities that present themselves to consciousness he discerns a temporal mode of existence. It is essential to his argument that the manner of existence itself is not represented to the mind by any distinct perception. And the

tenor of this study of space and time seems to be that our ideas of these realities are in the same situation with the idea of causal necessity, which he will describe later as the feeling of our mental determination or disposition. Yet Hume does not propose this conclusion at present. He might well argue, according to his own principles, that the mind is impelled to connect its perceptions in terms of contiguity in place and time and that this impulsive ordering of them constitutes the relation upon which our ideas of space and time are founded. The spatial and temporal disposition of the objects is the *mind's* disposition of them as it perceives. As a relation, then, the orders would *subsist* in the mind but not be represented *to* the mind. This is what the argument suggests.

But all Hume says in conclusion is that space is a "compound impression," that is, a total impression in which parts that are indivisible and therefore distinct as units of perception are united into a whole which cannot be treated as "simple." If this is so, we have here a case exactly analogous to the formation of a "universal" or a "substance." And the source of such complex impressions must be imagination, since we certainly do not make up the extension of colors, etc., by any deliberate or voluntary activities of our mind. Unconscious imagination seems to be the origin of our perception of all occurrences as taking place in time, and of the objects we see and touch as being in space.[21] Whether Hume meant to convey this or not we cannot definitely ascertain, since he omitted the entire subject of space and time from the *Enquiry* and destroyed an essay on geometry which probably contained his later thoughts, especially on space. Unless we suppose, however, that imagination accounts for our actual perception of a world in space and time, through its disposition to unite and connect particular things in certain ways ultimately peculiar

[21] It is probable that Locke designated "space" a "simple idea" just because he recognised that the mind could not produce it by any *voluntary* construction. Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 104, who sees Hume introducing here a *productive* imagination.

to human nature, we can hardly understand why this Second Part of the *Treatise* should have its important position in the book.

One thing is certain. The *conceiving* of space and time as separate realities is definitely accomplished by imagination. What we perceive are patches or points of color and touch, qualities disposed in the order of coexistence. Only by having experience of many various relations of such coexistence do we achieve a conception of that feature which is distinct from the particular colors and touches. On the strength of more than one association by way of resemblance we are able to think of the space of these different perceptions in abstraction from them. And here, as in the conception of relations, substances, and universals, we are misled by the fixity of language so that we treat these realities whose existence consists in relations as if they were themselves absolute entities, like qualities or objects. Thus we imagine a space and a time which are absolute and infinite. We talk about a space where there is no perceptible matter to make it possible. We conceive time as applying to an object which is unchanging, whereas time has no meaning apart from change or motion. This indefinite application of ideas which are relative to certain very limited perceptions is quite characteristic of the human mind. It has given rise to the "philosophical relation," the philosophical "substance," and the philosophical "abstract idea"—and now it produces the fiction of "absolute" space and time. The fact that there is this subsequent extension of our imagination may mean that imagination is really involved in the very "first appearance" of space and time to the mind.

Hume believed, at any rate, that he had accounted for the distinctive features of our common experience. We are never aware of the infinity of space and time but always of some definite objects in those two orders of existence. It is a fact that we start with finite parts or units. Our correction of these parts through later or more acute percep-

tion of them makes us presume that every part of time or space is divisible to infinity. We never actually make such an indefinite analysis into parts. There is always a practical limit where we are conscious of something "indivisible." Now this indivisible unit can be nothing else but a point or patch of color, or a touch sensation, or more generally, in the case of time, a moment "filled with some real object or existence, whose succession forms the duration, and makes it be conceivable to the mind." Our perception of such indivisible points and instants as particular qualities or objects makes us envisage the points in an order of coexistence and the moments in one of succession. These orders of existence are real and inseparable from the objects with which they make their appearance. They represent the continuity of space and time, which is more fundamental to it than the character of infinite divisibility. Thus we think of time and space extending *before* and *beyond* the situations in which we first perceive things in such relations. And the error of philosophers consists in applying the relations to cases beyond the conditions proper to any concrete space and time.

The consequences for science are thus quite revolutionary: "'Tis impossible to conceive either a vacuum and extension without matter, or a time, when there was no succession or change in any real existence." And objections to this new system of nature occur at once.

There is an argument from traditional mathematics which seems actually to refute the position that extension may be only finitely divisible. If "mathematical points" are indivisible they themselves have no extension, otherwise they would be susceptible of further division—but no quantity of such units without extension, or "non-entities," can possibly make up a real extensive thing. Now such reasoning would be conclusive were there no alternative between "mathematical" points as non-entities and

"indefinitely divisible" extension. We should have to commit ourselves, then, either to mere points of nothing making something really extended or else to extension never reaching an end of its division. But a third possibility has discovered itself to us. There are points whose nature is not purely quantitative or numerical,—they are units of color or solidity given us through our senses. These are the indivisibles of our perception and their making up an extension is not at all inconsistent with their being such points, for they are irreducible qualities, and not quantities.[22]

Another objection is that a point could not be conceived to exist contiguous with any other point, for they would have no "parts" to touch each other and must entirely "penetrate" each other if taken together. Yet one of the fundamental conceptions of nature is the impenetrability of matter. It seems as if we have no ground, therefore, to maintain that space consists of concrete points. Yet we might examine a little more closely this notion of penetration. Were two bodies united in such a way that the body resulting from their union occupied no more space than either one of them we should say they were penetrated by each other. But this is equivalent to the annihilation of one of them, for it no longer exists as a distinct thing. Now suppose we have a union of bodies such that both still preserve their distinct natures in it—then, we cannot talk of one being either penetrated or annihilated by the other. This is precisely what happens if we define matter in terms of points of color and solidity—a union between these points makes them at once contiguous with each other and really extending in space. Thus "from the union of these points there results an object, which is compounded and divisible, and may be distinguished into two parts, of which each preserves its existence distinct and separate, notwithstanding its contiguity to the other." Once again,

[22] Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, p. 100; J. S. Mackenzie, *Elements of Constructive Philosophy*, Macmillan, London, 1919, pp. 190 *f.*

therefore, we can interpret the reality of extension only by acknowledging that units of color and touch are essential to the matter of our world.

Hume finds a great mass of other objections hailing from mathematics. They all rest on demonstrations of the impossibility of such indivisible points. He is not able to cope with these abstract, detailed proofs. But he studies the original data of mathematical thought and finds that all such reasonings against his position begin with perceptual facts which are only intelligible in the light of his own new system. The definitions of mathematics presuppose the direct perception of space which he has described. Yet the conclusions drawn seem to contradict these initial facts of perception. This directs our attention to the nature of such mathematical reasoning and enables us to see that the maxims of that science are themselves not justified by reason but simply by the habits of mental life. Hume intends to show up the grand pretence of absolute mathematical "demonstration" and at the same time to defend the definitions of that science, definitions which his own system confirms.

"A surface is *defined* to be length and breadth without depth: a line to be length without breadth or depth: a point to be what has neither length, breadth nor depth. . . . A surface terminates a solid; a line terminates a surface; a point terminates a line; but I assert, that if the *ideas* of a point, line or surface were not indivisible, 'tis impossible we should ever conceive these terminations: for let these ideas be supposed infinitely divisible; and then let the fancy endeavour to fix itself on the idea of the last surface, line or point; it immediately finds this idea to break into parts; and upon its seizing the last of these parts, it loses its hold by a new division, and so on *ad infinitum*, without any possibility of its arriving at a concluding idea. . . . But as in fact there must be something, which terminates the idea of every finite quantity; and as this terminating idea cannot itself consist of parts

or inferior ideas . . . this is a clear proof, that the ideas of surfaces, lines and points admit not of any division; those of surfaces in depth; of lines in breadth and depth; and of points in any dimension." Thus mathematics requires the conception of indivisible finite parts of extension. And Hume believes that the defining of the point, line, surface, and solid is possible only because of the naïve perceptions of qualities of color and touch.

The demonstrations against this view are not conclusive. There are certain ideas involved in such reasoning "which are not exact, and maxims, which are not precisely true." For example, we employ the ideas of equality and proportion in respect to geometrical figures. What do we mean by those terms? Perhaps we consider one figure equal to another "when the number of points in each are equal, etc.," which is implicitly an acknowledgment that there are indivisible points to be distinctly counted and totalled. But if we think that all the points are actually divisible without end, we have only an ideal definition of the equality of two figures which we can never apply in any particular case.

We must inquire, then, into our standard of equality in actual practice. It must be something different from "an enumeration of the parts" in both figures. "There are many philosophers, who refuse to assign any standard of *equality*, but assert, that 'tis sufficient to present two objects, that are equal, in order to give us a just notion of this proportion. All definitions, say they, are fruitless, without the perception of such objects; and where we perceive such objects, we no longer stand in need of any definition. To this reasoning, I entirely agree; and assert, that the only useful notion of equality, or inequality, is derived from the whole united appearance and the comparison of particular objects."[23] Equality is thus a "relation," discerned after the fact. We have no distinct conception of such a standard with which to make a comparison. Our procedure

[23] A statement from the Appendix.

here is analogous to that in all natural judgments—we take in "the whole united appearance" of particular objects and *find* the relation between them within it. There are three possibilities in every such case. Things seem greater, less than, or equal to each other. These relations are not very precise, differing from each other in degree alone. We find by experience, therefore, that we need to correct our first judgments of such proportion. We guide ourselves often by the juxtaposition of a certain object as a "common and invariable measure." All this is still in the field of sense perception. But when the mind is once accustomed to such a practice it conceives "a mixed notion of equality," as something *holding between* particular objects and at the same time as being itself a *particular* measure, or standard *object*. And our mind presumes further, that because "there are bodies *vastly* more minute than those, which appear to the senses," there are necessarily "bodies *infinitely* more minute," which we then conceive to be incommensurate with any *merely perceptual* measure. Thus we "suppose some imaginary standard of equality, by which the appearances and measuring are exactly corrected, and the figures reduced entirely to that proportion." This is "plainly imaginary. For as the very idea of equality is that of such a particular appearance corrected by juxtaposition or a common measure, the notion of any correction beyond what we have instruments and art to make, is a mere fiction of the mind, and useless as well as incomprehensible."

Yet this act of imagination is all "very natural." It is the usual thing for our mind to make such presumptions of thought on the strength of habits developed through experience. This is true of time as well as space. Though we have a far less "exact method" of determining a proportion between the parts of time, yet we constantly correct our judgments of time and of the measures we employ. And this procedure gives us "an obscure and implicit notion of a perfect and entire equality" beyond all percep-

tual verification. Thus it is clear that the conceptions of equality and exact proportion so necessary to mathematical reasoning are themselves imaginary standards engendered solely from our habits of rectifying the immediate judgments of perception.[24]

The same thing happens in regard to our ideas of a "curve" and a "right line." Nothing is more obvious than the difference between these two figures in space, yet nothing is more elusive of exact definition. The right line is an extension of points, we may say, in a certain order other than that of the curve, yet "this order is perfectly unknown, and nothing is observed but the united appearance" of the lines. Despite our lack of insight into any distinct order we continually make our distinctions between the lines more accurate and employ some visible rule as a common measure, because we have a certain degree of assurance of its constancy in many situations. We advance here, as before, to the notion or "loose idea of a perfect standard to these figures, without being able to explain or comprehend it."

The usual definition of a right line has only the semblance of being exact. The straight line is the shortest way between two points. But this indicates only a property of the line and assumes that we already know what it is, for it implies a comparison with some other line greater than itself in length and supposes the presence of this line to perception in some form. It would seem, therefore, that the "rightness" is a relation which receives its definition only through the actual perception of extended objects. Moreover, the particular relation attributed in this definition is that of proportion, namely, a lesser extension than any other between the given points, and this relation itself of greater, less, or equal we have already discovered to be nothing at all exact.

Likewise, a plane surface cannot be determined by any precise standard. Its "general appearance" in perception

[24] Cf. Locke, Book II, chap. xiv, sec. 24, and chap. xxix, sec. 15.

we know, but not its intrinsic nature. Its definition as the outcome of "the flowing of a right line"[25] presupposes a knowledge of what constitutes a right line, which we have seen reason to doubt. Moreover, our conception of a plane is quite independent of this particular method of forming it. In fact, we should qualify this description of the flowing of the right line by the condition, that it must flow regularly, along two right lines parallel to each other—which is equivalent to saying, "on the same plane." We have thus defined a plane as something generated by motion in a plane, and must presuppose the very thing we are explaining. In short, we perceive planes, straight lines, and curves, as distinct from each other because there is a unity or order of colored and tangible points in each case, an order which these secondary qualities alone define and which we cannot pretend to distinguish by sheer reason.

Since the mathematicians presuppose these perceptual distinctions between figures and their relations which are made possible by color points and are only ideal notions derived from the habit of refining upon these distinctions within perception, they cannot logically deny those real, indivisible points of quality which make up the texture of space. Hume asserts, therefore, "that the idea of space or extension is nothing but the idea of visible or tangible points distributed in a certain order."[26]

Now the students of natural philosophy rise up against this view. It excludes the reality of a vacuum, that is, a space empty of perceptual qualities and a place where motion occurs. They argue that mankind must have some idea of a vacuum because they have always discussed it. And the existence of a vacuum seems quite possible when we try to realise what a world would be like without it. Suppose there is a *plenum*, with no place for motion, and suppose that God annihilates some part of the matter in

[25] Berkeley, *The Analyst*, Vol. III, sec. 3, pp. 18 *f.*
[26] *Treatise*, p. 358.

this full universe. Let us consider the room we are in to be such a closed world, and the air and other matter between the four walls and floor and ceiling to be the portion of it annihilated, these confining materials remaining at rest. We could not affirm, then, that the opposite sides touch each other. They would need to move in order to do that—but since they do not touch they require something existing between them. This must be a vacuum or empty space, since we have eliminated all material things. Thus a vacuum seems to be a genuine possibility. And further experience appears to make it really necessary. For bodies move from one place to another without anything being annihilated in the process, and these phenomena of motion demand the existence of a space within which matter exists and moves.

Hume believes, however, that this notion of a vacuum is entirely relative to certain highly special experiences of what happens in the space of our perception. Sometimes we do not perceive colored and visible objects and we refer to the situation, then, as one of darkness, meaning thereby not the positive quality of anything but simply the absence of light. At other times we seem to be aware of motion without feeling our passage over places but only a succession in time. In neither case should we have any idea of a vacuum. But if we have had such experience, as indeed we must, in our ordinary perception of visible and tangible things, we find that there seem to be intervals when we see nothing visible and feel nothing tangible. It is easy to rush to the conclusion that these intervals, as perceived, give us the impression from which we derive our idea of a vacuum. But this is not true. All we perceive in any case are the visible and tangible things. The darkness and the unfelt motion are simply negations of our perception, breaks in the continuity of the space.[27] Yet these very

[27] Hume will not allow a break in the continuity of time, because time is perceived with every sort of impression and idea, and not only with touch and color.

intervals are the occasion for our imagining a whole order of empty space. We perceive two objects with an interval between them where no visible objects appear, "as if the distance betwixt them were filled with visible objects, that give us a true idea of extension." We move our hands from one object to another separated from it by nothing tangibly perceptible exactly as we should were the space of motion filled with objects yielding sensations of touch. We find, moreover, that other perceptible qualities vary in proportion to their distance from us, whether or not we perceive any visible or tangible qualities throughout that distance. To all intents and purposes we may treat any intervals as if they were visible and tangible. And this means that our mental *disposition* in considering these situations is similar to our disposition in perceiving colors and qualities of touch extended in the order of coexistence. The "actions of the mind . . . are so little different, that we are not able to distinguish them." For "wherever the actions of the mind in forming any two ideas are the same or resembling, we are very apt to confound these ideas, and take the one for the other. Of this we shall see many instances in the progress of this treatise."[28] The various ways in which the mind itself is disposed will tend to assimilate with each other and impart fictitious aspects to what we perceive. Thus we attribute an extension to situations where it is not germane. Or rather, we imagine extension to be a reality existing independent of the perceptions of color and touch which alone make it possible. It seems to be essentially *empty* space, within which matter moves and shows itself. And yet the whole notion of the empty space is derived from a special situation occurring within our lives where we usually perceive space as a relation between definite bodies that show themselves to sight and touch. Empty space is relative to something already relative—and is thus doubly removed from anything "absolute."

[28] Cf. Spinoza, *Ethic*, Part III, Prop. XVIII, etc.

There remains one final criticism of this new system regarding space and time, which Hume accepts, and even makes his boast. Space and time are only the aspects of things to the human mind and not realities existing independently of it. Should not our philosophy "penetrate into the nature of bodies, or explain the secret causes of their operations" and show how space and time *must* be what they are in terms of such ultimate reality and its activities? "I content myself with knowing perfectly the manner in which objects affect my senses, and their connections with each other, as far as experience informs me of them. This suffices for the conduct of life; and this also suffices for my philosophy." And it is a position thoroughly consonant with empirical science, for Newton himself asserts a vacuum only as a relation between bodies such that other bodies may be received between them without displacing them or penetrating into them, and Newton confesses, further, that "the real nature of this position of bodies is unknown."[29] That is an admirably "modest scepticism" which Hume is proud to emulate.

Since we cannot do more than disclose the essential aspects and relations of the world in which we live and act, we must give up all pretence to a knowledge of some "external existence." The supposition of the separate existence of a reality "*specifically* different from our perceptions" is utterly futile. To specify what such a reality would be we can only describe it as either resembling what we actually perceive or as causally related to it, which is simply applying the relations of our experience to a reality which, we pretend, is beyond perception. We merely pattern another world upon the image of the one we know. Such an ultimate, "external world" is thus "the universe of the imagination." Our idea of it is founded upon a very special kind of causal conjunction among our perceptions, which we shall study later in the *Treatise*, after finding

[29] Cf. Newton, *op. cit.*, Rule 3, pp. 161-2, and *General Scholium*, pp. 312-3.

what causation itself rightly means. Thus external existence is itself "relative," like space, and time, and causation.

It is the dependence of space and time upon our sense perception of particular objects which constitutes the chief innovation of Part Two. Hume insisted that the secondary qualities are real. They are the very condition of the primary qualities of figure, motion, and space. Other philosophers had thrown these sense qualities into discredit because they could not assimilate them to the sciences of quantity which seemed to them the only true knowledge mankind possessed. But Hume had studied knowledge from a new point of view. He had reached a "modest scepticism" regarding the finality of Newton's physics, and even of geometrical reasoning. He saw no ground whatsoever for ignoring the plain aspects of reality which we all alike perceive, whether we be scientists or common people, the qualities of sensation and feeling. The real world is as truly colored as it is extended and figured and in motion. And what we have so long considered the essential qualities of the ultimately real are now found to be entirely relative to our human perception of these secondary qualities. It is only with reference to those familiar perceptions that all our ideas of space and time have any meaning.

This Second Part of the *Treatise* is marred by the haste with which Hume rushed into publication. Its defects are, as he put it himself, faults of expression rather than of principle. But these almost obliterate his principles which seem not to have been clearly realised by the author himself. In fact, the discussion bears all the marks of belonging to that very early period of thought which followed upon his discovery at the age of eighteen. He was thinking now with Malebranche, now with Locke, and now with Berkeley. He was anxious to show that the ideas of space, time, and external reality were not so simple as they had

been supposed, for this was preparatory to the disclosure of his own great contribution to the advancement of knowledge. He utilised the arguments of philosophers who maintained the relativity of these conceptions to the data of our senses. So far he was clear. But he was not very definite about the rôle of "association of ideas" in the affair. Space and time must be either "complex ideas" or "abstract ideas." Elsewhere he explained the formation of such ideas by the principle of an imagination operating according to its native tendencies, but here he hesitated. Does "association" account for the "united appearance" of the color and touch points so that they constitute an extension? He was silent. Yet when he came to deal with our "mistake" in thinking of space as something really "empty" or vacuous, he invoked the imaginative process. Now what happens in this mistake is that the "action of the mind" in perceiving tangible and visible things as extended is confused with an action of the mind closely resembling it, when we perceive such things with intervals between them which lack touch and color. This implies that the perception of space really involves an activity of the mind which takes place involuntarily.[30] It suggests that the "manner" in which we perceive objects in space or time represents our mental disposition. And this would put the perception of space and time in the same class of phenomena with the perception of necessary connection between cause and effect. Consequently, imagination would be involved in our perception of these realities. But Hume seems not to have distinguished this activity of the imagination from that "passive" phase of imagination which Malebranche interpreted as only the reflection of events taking place in the brain. So he offered the contiguity of brain traces as an "explanation" of our confusion of those two different mental activities with each other. This was to make brain states "causes" of mental events. It was contrary to his own earlier principle, that we should not talk

[30] Cf. Hedvall, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 118.

about activity, cause, or any term synonymous with them, until we examine what we can rightly mean by cause. Consequently he halted himself in this very explanation and confessed it to be, in all likelihood, quite "chimerical."[31] Hence we do not understand what he intended to explain by the principle of "association," whether it was our erroneous conception or our primary and original perception of space and time.

These vacillations betray Hume's lack of clarity with regard to the constructive principles of his forthcoming philosophy. Perhaps this was why he could never bring himself to revise this part of the *Treatise*, for he omitted practically all the discussion of space and time from the *Enquiry* and actually destroyed, about 1757, an essay on *The Considerations previous to Geometry and Natural Philosophy*.[32] He was still in the toils of discipleship to many different masters here, and not yet master of his own characteristic thought. The record of this in the Second Part of the *Treatise* was too incorrigibly "juvenile" ever to be redeemed by any careful expression of its genuinely valuable principles.

NOTE

The suggestions that Hume made have been recently developed into a significant body of thought about space, time, and matter. The various writers of the "realistic" school have given expression to it in many different ways. Sometimes they refer to the imagination and other times to the intellect as the source of the constructions of thought from the data of our perception. In *Space, Time, and Deity* by S. Alexander, we find the imagination recognised. —Macmillan, London, Vol. I, pp. 152, 166-7, 168, 222-4, and Vol. II, p. 147. In Alexander's view space is defined to us not by color and touch qualities but by time, and time itself is distinguished in its durations by space—an interesting alternative to Hume's hypothesis.—Vol. I, pp. 38, 46-50, 60-1, 63, 148, 260.

B. Russell makes the idea of a single space an "intellectual construction," *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for*

[31] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 364-5.
[32] *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 60-1.

Scientific Method in Philosophy, pp. 89-92, 112-22, 147-52. Perhaps the argument most akin to Hume's is that of C. D. Broad, in *Perception, Physics, and Reality: an Enquiry into the Information that Physical Science can supply about the Real*, Cambridge University Press, 1914, especially pp. viii, xii, 17-9, 22, 29, 94, 113, 299 *ff.*; and subsequently in *Scientific Thought*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1923, pp. 33-9, 57-65, 268, 281-2, 285, 290, 293-4, 310, 402, 457, 485-6, 522, 542. Broad acknowledges his own indebtedness to the writings of A. N. Whitehead: *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 1919; *The Concept of Nature*, 1920; and *The Principle of Relativity, with Applications to Physical Science*, 1922.

It is worthy of notice, too, that students of Einstein and of the tendencies of contemporary thought in physics, like Moritz Schlick, connect the name of Hume with the present movement. "Einstein's analysis of the conceptions of space and time belongs to the same category of philosophic evolution as David Hume's criticism of the idea of substance and causality."—*Space and Time in Contemporary Physics: An Introduction to the Theory of Relativity and Gravitation*, tr. by H. L. Brose, Oxford University Press, 1920, p. 87, the Chapter entitled, *The Finitude of the Universe*. Cf. also pp. 4, 22, 32, 36.

CHAPTER SIX

The Nature and Meaning of Causation

It may, therefore, be a subject worthy of curiosity, to enquire what is the nature of that evidence, which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory. This part of philosophy, it is observable, has been little cultivated, either by the ancients or moderns; and therefore our doubts and errors, in the prosecution of so important an enquiry, may be the more excusable; while we march through such difficult paths, without any guide or direction."[1] Thus Hume presents, in the *Enquiry*, the novelty of his philosophical undertaking. It is, first and foremost, his examination of the way in which we infer the reality of things remote from our immediate experience.

The fact from which we start is our certainty of the existence of such remote objects, an assurance so remarkable that we distinguish it by a special term, "belief." "This operation of the mind, which forms the belief of any matter of fact, seems hitherto to have been one of the greatest mysteries of philosophy; though no one has so much as suspected, that there was any difficulty in explaining it. . . . This act of the mind has never yet been explained by any philosopher; and therefore I am at liberty to propose my hypothesis concerning it."[2]

And the reason why philosophers were so little aware of the difficulty in accounting for our belief in the inferences we make from experience is that they had supposed it to be an act of reason—we conclude the existence of a remote object because we discern the necessity of its connection with what we immediately perceive. Hume's inquiry is funda-

[1] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 23.
[2] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 397 (par. added in the *Appendix*) and Note; *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 41.

mentally concerned, then, with this supposed "necessary connection." When reasoning by inference and belief are both thoroughly investigated, this causal necessity will at last be disclosed in its real nature. "I think it proper to give warning, that I have just now examined one of the most sublime questions in philosophy, *viz.*, *that concerning the power and efficacy of causes;* where all the sciences seem so much interested." And not only the sciences but all knowledge whatsoever—"there are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics, more obscure and uncertain, than those of *power*, *force*, *energy*, or *necessary connection*, of which it is every moment necessary for us to treat in all our disquisitions. We shall, therefore, endeavor, in this section, to fix, if possible, the precise meaning of these terms."[3]

As Hume sets out upon this comprehensive inquiry into the exact meaning of causality and the actual process of all empirical reasoning and belief, he recognises the need to justify his extraordinary emphasis upon the special relation of cause and effect. His philosophy is an attempt to account for the mind of the common people. Do people ordinarily employ this relation in their practical reasonings? Are not their mental processes exceedingly varied, irreducible to this one single type of causal inference? Does not this new philosophy err on the side of undue simplicity, just as Locke's had in respect to sophistication?

Whatever these acts of the understanding are, they must consist in the knowing of a relation of some sort between the things known. Some of these relations depend upon the nature of the ideas we have of the things being compared, while others are independent of them. Some vary with the changing of the things themselves, others vary regardless of the state of the things. The former relations remain "invariable" so long as our ideas of the things related suffer no intrinsic alteration. This is the case, for example, with the relation of equality between two

[3] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 451; *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 51.

right angles and the three interior angles of a triangle. But there is another form of knowledge, contrasting with such mathematical knowledge, where we take in the relation of contiguity, identity, and causal connection between things. Here it is evident that the relations may vary even while the objects are conceived to be unchanging: the "qualities" we perceive yield no direct knowledge of the relations as being intrinsic to the objects, or essential. If we have any certainty with regard to things in such variable relations, it is plainly not the kind that we enjoy in mathematics.

There are some relations, further, which do not involve any processes of reasoning. The resemblance, contrariety, and degrees of the quality of an object "are discoverable at first sight, and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration." When we decide concerning anything that it resembles another, or contrasts with it, or differs from it in the degree of a certain quality exhibited by both things, "we always pronounce at first sight, without any enquiry or reasoning." Consequently no question exists here for the philosopher.

The quantitative relations are both intuitive and demonstrative. Geometry rests upon the perception of "the general appearance of the objects" and yet attempts to prove various propositions regarding these objects, by means of some conceptions that are not exact or precise. It is defective as a science because its maxims of proportion or equality have no foundation in reason but are merely working principles carried over from the rough measurements of common life. The only sciences in which we can advance to remote truths by very complex processes of reasoning are algebra and arithmetic. For we have a clear and determinate standard of the equality and proportion of numbers. This form of thought presents, therefore, no problem for our philosophy.

But the common people are not mathematicians engaged

in the pursuit of intellectual certainty—they are men reasoning about the facts of their life and experience. So far, however, we have come upon only this one kind of reasoning, the ascertaining of quantitative relation, for all the other relations are either evident to intuition or so variable that they do not seem to permit of any certain knowledge. Yet it is precisely this group of variable relations which occupies the thought of the man of action. What he wants to know about his world is the cause or the effect of a certain phenomenon, or the identity of a thing appearing to him at different times and places, or the nearness, or remoteness, of one thing with respect to another. These relations are what concern him. Any knowledge he possesses will have to be knowledge of objects in terms of such relations. And he always claims it to be certain knowledge for the purposes of his life and intercourse with his fellow men. This means that these relations are, after all, truly invariable for our living human experience. We judge, for example, that certain objects "are either always *remote* or always *contiguous*" and we regard this relation, in the course of our experience, as "invariable." Again, we take an object to be individually the same permanent thing, despite its absence from our perception for a certain period of time, as if it could veritably have given us "an invariable and uninterrupted perception." But why do we assume these judgments to be true determinations of fact? We have *implicitly* depended on the relation of cause and effect. The unchanging relations of distance or nearness seem so because we think of a cause *determining* the objects to these invariable relations in the spatial order.[4] We believe in the identity of an object with itself over a period of time, if there is no discoverable cause for any change in it throughout that time. Thus all the affirmations of our practical life involve the idea of causation. To understand

[4] Leibnitz had indicated that causation is implied in all determinations of the spatial relations of things. Above, p. 142.

the common processes of knowledge, therefore, we must investigate, first and foremost, the meaning of this causal relation.

The idea of cause is not one which we can trace to any simple impression of the senses. When we think of a cause we can locate it in no particular qualities of sensation. There are always various qualities present, giving us the ideas of objects, but they reveal no specifically causal item. Evidently, the causality is a relation.

We find, whenever we think causally, that we have objects which exist contiguous with each other in space and time and that we name one of them the "cause," because it is prior in time to the other, its "effect." Both these features of contiguity and succession seem quite essential. Though we may be inclined, perhaps, to question the priority of the cause in time, we discover, upon reflection, that if causation were not to involve such a process in a forward direction, time itself would cease to exist for us: "For if one cause were co-temporary with its effect, and this effect with *its* effect, and so on, 'tis plain there would be no such thing as succession, and all objects must be co-existent." However, these details in the description of what is in our mind when we think of causation are not very important, for they do not comprise the distinctive character of the causal relation. This is its "necessity." It is not a quality apparent within the objects, nor a relation reducible to those of contiguity in time and place, and priority in time. It is the very essence of our idea of causation, and it is still utterly mystifying.

We might suppose, however, that the necessity of the connection between objects in space and time is but the very necessity of logical thought. In that case we could not think of something beginning to exist at some place without a distinct thing existing there to bring it into existence. If we formed such a conception, we should find it self-contradictory, and meaningless. But Hume had long

familiarised himself, it seems, with precisely such an alternative in respect to the Whole of physical existence.[5] The possibility of this contrary view is very real. Surely we cannot pretend, therefore, that the necessity of a cause for everything is a truly logical one. Every actual attempt of philosophers in the past to prove this maxim by logic has turned out to be fallacious and begging the question. The notion of causal necessity appears to be so deeply insinuated into our thinking that we cannot demonstrate it by reason without tacitly assuming it to be true. If this is so, we should not hope, any longer, to discover by such *a priori* methods what manner of thing this necessity is. It would be wiser to study the aspects of the affair with which we are acquainted in our common life, and examine the concrete reasonings wherein we make use of this idea. We must inquire, "why we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that *inference* we draw from the one to the other, and of the *belief* we repose in it." After this study of inference and belief we may be able to tell what a cause really is.

When we infer the existence of something, we have before us an impression of the senses or memory. What we conclude from that present perception is the idea of another distinct thing. Nothing else appears to be there, as a "component" in our reasoning. No actual bond or connection is ever perceived. There is, of course, a notable difference in our feeling when we have an impression and an idea separately, a difference which may be characterised by the "vivacity" or "force" of the perception. This counts for something in our attitude toward the impression, for we acknowledge its reality in our conduct. But this quality of feeling can give no illumination to us as we are proceeding to infer the existence of some object related to such an impression. How, then, has this *particular*

[5] Above, chap. II.

idea come to be present to our mind? By what is the mind guided in its representation of this new object, if not by some discerned, uniting element or connecting bond between two such distinct objects? Apparently, we must here pass in thought from one to the other *without any insight* into the propriety of such transition.

Despite this lack of insight, our venture of thought seems not unreasonable. There is nothing haphazard about it, or even arbitrary. Somehow it is determined by factors other than mere chance or the will of man. And this has led philosophers to say that we infer the appropriate object from the present perception with the guidance of experience. Though we seem to have no discernment of a principle of connection upon which to rely, as we conceive some existence remote from our immediate perception, we do have experience directing us in our adventure. Would not this account for the acknowledged value of all our causal inferences?

But let us examine experience. "We remember to have had frequent instances of the existence of one species of objects; and also remember, that the individuals of another species of objects have always attended them, and have existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them." We possess our experience, then, as memories.[6] They are the memories not only of the kinds of objects we have perceived but also of their order of conjunction with each other. And these conjunctions in space and time must be so frequent that we take them to be the rule for all events. Now this is plainly a genuine factor in every causal inference. We proceed from a memory of these constant conjunctions to conclude the existence of some fact or object of which we have not yet had experience. So far, then, this study of our actual procedure in all inference proves enlightening. By direct inspection we had been able to discover only the "contiguity" and the "suc-

[6] Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. II: "Much memory, or memory of many things, is called experience."

cession" involved in the causal relation—we now see something that is not immediately apparent, namely, this constancy of the conjunction, this frequency and regularity in the occurrence of specific things in our experience.

Still, this factor of experience is insufficient to explain our inference. It does not acquaint us at all with that "necessity" which we think we know in the causal relation. This is obvious at once. The mere number of times we perceive a special order of objects in the events of our world "can only multiply, but not enlarge the objects of our mind." And "what we learn not from one object, we can never learn from a hundred, which are all of the same kind, and are perfectly resembling in every circumstance." So "from the mere repetition of any past impression, even to infinity, there never will arise any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connection." Yet we assume that necessity, and must account for it. Even supposing an absolutely constant conjunction in time and place between identically the same things, (which is never actually the case, since resemblance is generally partial, and constancy implies a certain amount of variation), even supposing such perfectly regular experience, we cannot yet understand how this relative constancy becomes, for us, an absolute necessity of connection.

If we scrutinise our inference once more, we notice that every such operation yields us something that is new and informing. Though the inferred fact comports with past experience it is not merely a remembrance. Inference is the work of imagination. And before we consider Hume's next suggestion, in the *Treatise*, we shall do well to refer, at this juncture in the argument, to the *Enquiry*, for the revised version of his thought amply justifies Hume's own opinion of it;—that it really adds something to the earlier writing.[7]

The *Enquiry* brings out very clearly the defect of experience. "As to past *experience*, it can be allowed to give *direct* and *certain* information of those precise objects

[7] Letter to Elliot, in Burton, Vol. I, p. 337: "*Addo dum minuo.*"

only, and that precise period of time, which fell under its cognisance: but why this experience should be extended to future times, and to other objects, which for aught we know, may be only in appearance similar; this is the main question on which I would insist." In any particular case, our knowledge from experience must be formulated in this proposition: "*I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect.*" But our actual pretension, in every inference, is something different: "*I foresee, that other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects.*"[8] We expect, not the literal objects we have known, but something like them. Our foresight extends the pattern of events in space and time to the future itself, and reaches toward a genuinely new object of which we have not had any experience.

Thus our inference is essentially an adventure at making nature orderly and uniform. It must be an act of imagination, assimilating all the things in our world to each other. And the solution, Hume hastens to suggest, is that we are determined to pass from some given impression of the senses or memory to the idea of a new object actually existing "by a certain association and relation of perceptions."[9]

But at once a question occurs, whether our inference may not still be an act of *reasoning* beyond experience. It is, of course, not the mere remembering of some object which we have observed many times before in conjunction with another particular object. That would not explain the element of novelty or information. But can we not argue from the pattern of experience to situations of which we have at present no definite information? If we learn certain rules of the course of nature, from experience, may we not rightly draw particular conclusions about the existence of specific things, now unknown to us, in terms of these known regularities?

[8] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 30.
[9] *Treatise*, p. 390.

To reason from such general laws to new facts, we must be convinced that the maxim we follow in doing so is itself beyond all doubt. The principle underlying every such extension of the past into the future is "*that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.*" Are we certain of these principles? Can we establish them by logical demonstration?

To prove that the future must resemble the past order of events we should need to exhibit the contrary (a course of nature not uniform with itself at all times), as itself entirely impossible of conception. But we can indeed imagine "that the course of nature may change, and that an object, seemingly like those which we have experienced, may be attended with different or contrary effects."[10] There is no matter of fact which might not have existed otherwise than it now appears to us. Consequently, our reliance upon this principle of thinking about the future in terms of our past experience is not justified by any logic.

Suppose, then, we treat this maxim itself as a veritable generalisation from all our experience. Again and again the same kinds of thing have been conjoined with each other in a like order of contiguity and succession. Events recur with unmistakable regularity. When exceptions to what we take to be laws of nature occur, we search until we find the rules of which they are instances, or else we extend our first laws to include these new cases. Always, however, there must be order. And although we cannot prove that the order so far known to us *must* be found in all subsequent experience, we may certainly deem it *likely* that the special laws of our experience will apply to the future. In other words, we have an assurance in our maxim of the uniformity of nature from our experience of the many specific instances when it has been warranted. But all unawares, we have only begged the question, in this

[10] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 31.

argument. For this very "probability is founded on the presumption of a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those, of which we have had none; and therefore 'tis impossible this presumption can arise from probability." The induction of the very principle of induction itself is no *explanation* of it. Thus the whole problem still waits for a solution. On every hand our act of thought, whether in causal inference or in the forming and applying of a general principle or law, is not rational in the strict sense of the word. It is simply a "presumption" of the mind.

All "presumptive" thinking is the expression of our human imagination. Whenever such ventures of the mind take place "constantly and uniformly," they bear witness to something ultimate in our nature. They are determined by something intrinsic to the human mind and are not further traceable to either reason or experience. They are, then, "associations" of perception in our imagination.

This does not mean that imagination operates entirely on its own initiative—it needs the materials of experience, the constant conjunctions of objects in time and place. There is an interesting analogy between our conceiving of causal laws and the inferences we make from them and our formation and use of general ideas. Different objects in our experience bear a resemblance to each other and come to be imagined as of one sort, and, if they appear often enough in our lives, the general species receives a name by means of which we refer to any particular instance of it. Then, upon hearing the word which designates this kind of object, we are able to imagine a definite one appropriate to the context of our thought and conversation at the time, without "reflection" upon the whole compass of our past experience of that species.[11] Likewise, from

[11] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 393-4. I am interpreting this paragraph in the light of Hume's study of *Abstract Ideas*. See also p. 404: "In all the most established and uniform conjunctions of causes and effects, such as those of gravity, impulse, solidity, etc., the mind never carries its view expressly to consider any past experience."

our experience of resemblance in the *order* of objects which are in contiguity and succession, we conceive of their unity, or relation to each other, and we may even speak of it as a *law* of nature. Moreover, when we infer some new fact on the strength of such causal law, we do so without any reflection upon the numerous instances of the relation in the past, and yet we are able to represent to ourselves the specific object which is exactly relevant to our situation. There is not only presumption in such inference but sagacity. This exhibits the imagination in its true rôle, as an operation of mind that takes advantage of past experience to make our life at every moment an affair of perfect order, so that all change and novelty in it becomes assimilated with what has already happened.

Since it is really the imagination which makes the order of nature with every inference to some cause or effect from present data, we now realise something that is distinctive of the causal relation. It is a "natural relation." It is a unity and connection of ideas in our thought which the mind naturally makes. Only by accepting some theory like this can we understand the phenomenon of inference. The relations already singled out, contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction are the only constituents that we can discover in the data of our experience—but they do not account for the forwardness and the necessity which are such unmistakable features of our thought in terms of cause and effect. To ascribe that causal inference to "human nature" is to make its elusive and remarkable character more intelligible. For the necessity which is not logical, we begin to see, may really be natural, like instinct in man.

Here again the *Enquiry* renders the argument more perfect. Hume has neglected to bring out, in the earlier book, his answer to the very first problem: "Why we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects." Just *what* is *in* the mind when we reason

from a present object to some particular thing existing remote from us in time and place? While the maxim of causal reasoning is natural to man, any special law of causal relation is but the outcome of this principle as it works, through the imagination, upon our experience. How do these various general relationships between different kinds of things exist in our mind? The answer to this the *Enquiry* now clearly reveals: "When we assert, that, after the constant conjunction of two objects, heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity, we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other." "Custom, then, is the great guide of human life. . . . without the influence of custom, we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact, beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses."[12] These habits of mind are thus the real foundations of all the detailed acts of reasoning which give us our knowledge of the world.

Ultimately these particular dispositions of the imagination are formed by virtue of the intrinsic character of the human mind itself. This is Hume's solution of the second problem, concerning the "nature" of our inference in general. "All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent."[13] It is as necessary, in the circumstances, as the passion of love. Thus it is not surprising that we actually feel a very peculiar attitude toward these conclusions of causal inference. We *believe* them. And this phenomenon leads Hume to his third problem, the interpretation of belief.

The sentiment of belief is a mysterious thing. Hume finds a difficulty even in describing it. What it means, however, in common life is indeed obvious. Our beliefs are more real to us than the fictions of imagination; they weigh more in our thinking; they influence our passions

[12] *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 37, 39.
[13] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 40.

and the conduct of our lives; they appear to have greater importance than anything else we meet with in our thought and action. When a philosopher tries to define such belief in terms of "perception" he confronts a genuine problem. For the perception at which we arrive, in every causal inference, is simply an *idea* of the object which is related to some present impression. By no amount of analysis can we discern any distinct impression attaching itself to this idea and marking it out *as* a belief. And Hume felt it needful, after completing the entire *Treatise*, to return to this topic in an *Appendix*. He was dissatisfied with what he had written in the text.[14] He wanted to make it clear that no separate impression of real existence ever attends an idea of something we believe. He added, moreover, that belief is a characteristic feeling with regard to that idea alone which is the outcome of our causal inference, a determined conceiving of that particular object. We can only appreciate this unique *manner* of conception when we bear in mind the *impulsive* nature of our inference.

As we reach forward in thought to the idea of some object of which we have had no experience we are in a peculiar "disposition" of mind. From our previous studies we expect that the manner in which the mind is disposed to act imparts some unique character to its perceptions, as when we perceive things in the orders of coexistence and succession—the time and space reflect the *manner* of our perception of objects and cannot be identified as distinct impressions separable from the objects. Now, if our manner of *conceiving* objects too is found to be quite remarkable or characteristic, we may attribute the special quality of our feeling or sentiment in belief to the very nature of our inference.

How, then, is our mind actually disposed when we conceive of some particular object upon perceiving another

[14] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 555 *ff*. Indeed, one of his earlier statements seems to imply that belief is a distinguishable quality which "always attends" every sense-impression, as a matter of course—p. 387.

one immediately present? In every case there is a "custom operating upon the imagination . . . before we have time for reflection."[15] That is, "the thought is always determined to pass from the impression to the idea, and from that particular impression to that particular idea, without any choice or hesitation."[16] "Our imagination passes from the first to the second, by a natural transition which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it."[17] In other words, this is a case of "natural relation." Being impressed by some object before us, we no sooner attend to it than we are impelled straightway to conceive an object related to it in terms of our experience. This impulse of imagination is so natural and so immediate that it must "communicate" to the idea in our thought the vivacity of the original impression—that is, the interest we take in it. What is thus conceived impresses us as much as what we perceive through sensation or memory. Indeed, the conclusions of such inference are actually more strong and convincing than those of a logical demonstration, for they are promptly and naturally reached by imagination, whereas the devices of reasoning are a complicated labor of the mind, detracting from the eventual force of our conclusion.[18] Our native beliefs come as spontaneously as the passions and sentiments of the heart. They proceed from a natural relation which it is instinctive for the mind to make. Thus nothing is ever believed to exist unless it is conceived in relation to other objects of perception—even the impression of the first object which gives rise to our conception of the new object must itself sustain some such relation to our previous experience, if we are to *believe* it to exist.[19] Therefore, all belief whatsoever is "something, that depends not on the will, but must arise from

[15] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 404.
[16] p. 410.
[17] p. 443.
[18] p. 397 n.
[19] pp. 402-3: "The present impression has not this effect [belief] by its own proper power and efficacy, and when considered alone, as a single perception, limited to the present moment."

certain determinate causes and principles, of which we are not masters."[20] It is involuntary and necessary, because the process of imaginative inference is itself determined for us by nature.

This study of belief and its sources in the imagination seems to lead us nearer the origin of our idea of causal "necessity." Causation is a "natural" relation for the human understanding. Our manner of conceiving objects in any such natural relation has a certain character which we tend to call "determination," a word which is synonymous with "necessity." This suggests the remarkable hypothesis, that the necessity we seem to discern in every causal relation is nothing but the feeling of our own mental determination as we infer one thing from another through the influence of the customary conjunctions of our past experience. The view is thus analogous with the previous theory of space and time. But Hume withholds his suggestion until later. He is profoundly conscious of the incredulity with which people will read what he has already said about inference and belief, and he now wants "to confirm such extraordinary, and such fundamental principles."[21] There ought to be some concrete analogies both for the process of mind itself and for the resultant belief. Do not the other "natural relations," or associations, yield something like belief?

It is a fact, indeed, that a picture of some absent friend will recall him to our mind with great vividness, or that something from our own neighborhood will make "home" more present in our thoughts. The relations of resemblance and contiguity are clearly bound up with our added interest in these distant realities. They are discoverable in every such situation when our mind passes in thought from an immediate object to one quite distinct from it but somehow recognised with it.

[20] *Appendix*, p. 555.
[21] p. 406.

Nevertheless, these very analogies seem to raise a serious doubt about our present theory of belief. If belief arises from all determinate action of the mind in its natural passage from impression to idea, we should expect a belief, too, in these cases of association by contiguity and resemblance. Yet it is plain that we never come to believe in the existence of any objects merely because of these other two relations in our thought. The most we can say is that they produce an additional vividness or interest, which is not equivalent to belief. Are these analogies of any value, then, for the support of our hypothesis?

The question merely reveals that causal inference is by far the most essential factor in our life and that all belief is uniquely dependent upon it. What we call "realities" are either the things perceived by sense or memory, or those to which the thought is *determined* by our experience of the constant or customary conjunctions among objects. Because our mind cannot do otherwise than conceive things in accordance with the pattern of events in the past it dignifies such conceptions by making them into one "system" with the realities of sensation and memory. Though Hume writes, indeed, as if there were two separate systems of the real, he is committed to a single order by his own earlier statement, that even impressions of sense are not believed to be real when devoid of a natural connection in our thought. We may even say, that the very impression which induces us to believe in the existence of a certain object is itself confirmed in *its* reality by its present *relation*. Thus inference alone "peoples the world."[22] This means that belief is absolutely peculiar to that operation of the mind when it transfers the past to the future in accordance with experience.

There are, of course, those other natural transitions of thought where such "custom" is no condition, but they will not yield belief. Yet we should expect them to increase the force of any existing belief. This is what actually hap-

[22] p. 408.

pens in the cases we have cited. We have known our friend, and upon seeing his picture we are not then and there induced to believe in his *existence*: we only take a more *lively* interest in him than before we were presented with his likeness. And the same is true of our recollection of home. It is a real fact in our life from the first and it becomes for us only an object of more express concern by the presence of something closely connected with it. Thus any conclusion of inference will be strengthened in its convincing quality, if we find it also related in terms of contiguity or similarity with a present object. Evidence of this truth comes, very strikingly, from the sphere of religious belief. We may have some grounds for believing in a future state, but we are very unsteady in our belief, for we cannot imagine what it would be *like*, in terms of our present condition on earth—the lack of any interesting resemblances leaves us, indeed, somewhat incredulous of the descriptions offered by theologians. This implies, of course, that the supposition of a future life is only a probable truth, since any inference fully warranted by experience would need no corroboration whatsoever from other natural relations and could not suffer from the lack of it. Such instances bring out, however, the two points upon which Hume insists, first, that "the relation of cause and effect is requisite to persuade us of any real existence," and then, that the other relations "have some effect, and augment the conviction of any opinion, and the vivacity of any conception." We may affirm, in general, therefore, "that all belief arises from the association of ideas."[23]

Hume was tempted to offer another analogy, an unfortunate one, which he omitted afterwards in the *Enquiry*. It occurred to him, doubtless, because of ambiguity in that term "custom," and also a misconception of "education." Since it is a habit of mind that determines us to think and believe in the reality of an object not present to our per-

[23] pp. 409-11.

ception, we might expect other habits, not developing naturally but by some artifice, to bring about the same result. And Hume was convinced that "we shall find more than one half of those opinions, that prevail among mankind, to be owing to education, and that the principles, which are thus implicitly embraced, overbalance those, which are owing either to abstract reasoning or experience." But he then defines education as a process exactly like that when "liars, by the frequent repetition of their lies, come at last to remember them" as facts. By dinning certain notions into ourselves we come to believe them. This emphasises the mere *repetition* in the custom, and it makes education equivalent to an indoctrination. Thus Hume even misstates what the process of inference itself is, in order to make the artificial character of such education seem properly analogous to it. "For supposing that in all past experience we have found two objects to have been always conjoined together, 'tis evident, that upon the appearance of one of these objects in an impression, we must from custom make an easy transition to the idea of that object, which usually attends it."[24] This is a sheer perversion of his own meaning. It refers to two objects always found together and always recurring with each other in our experience and thought. This means that if we do not happen to perceive them in conjunction at that moment and yet think of one immediately after the other or with it, we simply *remember* it. But no inference is the mere recall of the numerically identical things of past perception. It is essentially the conception of some object *similar* to the one now present to us. Inference is something assimilative. It is imaginative. Of course it cannot take place apart from the constancy of conjunctions in experience, but, when it occurs, it is genuinely informing, and not repetitive. Hume may be correct enough in his facts, that we owe more of our beliefs to education, in the large sense of the term, than

[24] p. 414.

to operations of our individual minds with the data of our experience. But his view of education as merely the presenting of an idea again and again without any relevance to our interest or experience is not equivalent to the truth which he wants to enforce: all belief depends upon *relations* in the mind, relations that are natural and determinate. If education were thought of as an assimilation of the accredited experience of mankind, it would serve, perhaps, as a very good analogy for the influence of custom upon belief. But Hume made no special study of the educative processes, and he wisely refrained, therefore, from introducing this subject in the *Enquiry*.

There is another observation concerning the sources of belief where Hume has likewise contradicted the purport of his argument. Sometimes we are convinced of the reality of a certain cause or effect by a single experiment made with great discrimination.[25] In this case we are not determined, apparently, by any specific custom or constant conjunction of the objects in our experience. But such a phenomenon could not possibly take place apart from our general expectation that like objects placed in like circumstances will always produce similar effects. It is this total habit of thought that lies behind every case of belief which seems to be based wholly upon a single instance of a conjunction. We are entirely assured with regard to this particular conclusion by the practice of a life-time. This seems a reasonable explanation of the fact. But incidentally, Hume represents this general habit of mind as being made up of the "millions" of specific habits. From finding particular instances habitually recurring we come to think generally that the future must resemble the past: an induction the foundation of which Hume has earlier pointed out as the very problem itself of this entire book. The merely habitual will never explain any belief. Imagination must be there, with its native tendency to make every-

[25] p. 405.

thing continue uniformly,—an instinct which the conjunctions of events in experience only serve to fix in those myriads of definite habits of mind.

It is entirely appropriate, then, for Hume to add, by way of conclusion to his study of custom, a footnote exalting our imagination. He speaks, in the text, of "the judgment, or rather the imagination," and he calls attention to his varied use of the latter term.[26] Sometimes it means the source of "whimsies and prejudices" with their "opprobrious character." But it may also signify that which gives rise to all the judgments of cause and effect, which are deemed so valuable that mankind has tended to consider them the work of "reason" itself. Consequently, we are to interpret the term by its context. Imagination is sometimes contrasted with memory, at other times with reason, and sometimes with neither of these activities of mind. It is obviously to be regarded (in the present argument) as having a eulogistic meaning.

Imagination is important in our lives, beyond all other acts of mind. Our deeds seem to be animated largely by the pleasure or pain we feel as a result of the presence of this or that particular object to our perception. Were we limited to the immediately obvious things of sense or memory, we should live with very little security, or satisfaction—the imaginative representation of distant objects, imparting to them a reality equal to direct sensation, enables us to act with a much wider purview and to win safety and a modicum of happiness in the world. This foresight of ours is wonderfully efficient. "Here, then, is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas."[27] Our thought goes forward in imagination to anticipate experience and in doing so it finds nature confirming its venture, so far as our physical subsistence is concerned. The influence of such imagination even upon our passions, as well as upon our more de-

[26] p. 416.
[27] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 46.

liberate activities, is most salutary. We achieve through it "the eternal established persuasions," and adjust our lives in accordance with them.[28] To such imagination we owe a form of learning that is eminently practical and well-tested.

The *Enquiry* adds a further thought. Since the operation of inference yielding belief in matter of fact is so essential to the existence of mankind, "it is more conformable to the ordinary wisdom of nature to secure so necessary an act of the mind, by some instinct or mechanical tendency, which may be infallible in its operations, may discover itself at the first appearance of life and thought, and may be independent of all the labored deductions of the understanding."[29] The tendency to infer or to anticipate some particular reality from our experience of events in the past is not itself a custom or habit engendered from experience but a fundamental endowment of the human mind, an instinct.

Nothing in the whole sphere of human understanding reveals this native tendency of the mind so unmistakably as our thought of what is probable. Hume's study of *Probability* was not made perfunctorily, just in order to complete his survey of the intellectual processes. He was truly concerned with arguments which will establish probability. This may have dated from that earliest period of his reflections on religion, when he saw the defect in Berkeley's proof of the existence and nature of God, that there is no *a priori* ground for the maxim of causation. While he was still engrossed with his own new studies in human knowledge Berkeley had produced *Alciphron*, a more modest and empirical statement of the case for theism. And then Bishop Butler appeared on the scene with the *Analogy of Religion*. He showed that our persuasions are rarely the "eternal established" ones, but that "to us probability is the very

[28] *Treatise*, p. 422.
[29] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 47.

guide of life." This is the kind of thinking which prevails in the life of the common people. And Butler himself described the nature of this reasoning in such a way as to rank it with those presumptuous acts of the mind to which Montaigne, Hobbes, and Malebranche had first called attention.[30] "When we determine a thing to be probably true (instead of demonstrably certain), suppose that an event has or will come to pass, it is from the mind's remarking in it a likeness to some other event, which we have observed has come to pass. And this observation forms, in numberless daily instances, a presumption, opinion, or full conviction, that such event has or will come to pass." But "it is not my design to enquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability; or whence it proceeds that *likeness* should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors to which reasoning from analogy is liable. This belongs to the subject of logic, and is a part of that subject which has not yet been thoroughly considered."[31] And Hume, who was something of a follower of Bishop Butler, first accepted the view that such reasoning points to an instinct of our nature, and then set out boldly to investigate for himself how this instinct works through our imagination.

This study brings out the genuine originality of Hume's thought in the whole treatment of *Knowledge and Probability*. It is very easy to lose oneself in the ambiguity of that term "custom," which is the foundation of every *particular* belief or *specific* law of nature. Hume himself did so, because he was not always master of his expression. He was following a suggestion given him by Butler who had been well aware of the novelty and dan-

[30] Malebranche had expressed a genuine appreciation of probable reasoning, even for the attainment of scientific knowledge. *Recherche*, Book I, chap. III, sec. 2.

[31] *Introduction* to the *Analogy*.

ger of introducing the term, with its old Greek meaning, into modern philosophy. Thus when we talk of inferences being based upon the constant conjunctions of experience, we may think that every conclusion so formed is nothing but a recall of one of the literal sequences of our past experience. The inferring seems to be a "habit" in the most mechanical sense. Moreover, we tend unduly to simplify nature, when we consider the formation of any such habit, for we conceive events to recur without any variety, and as always exactly the same in their components and order. What really happens is that objects *resembling* each other appear in conjunction with other objects of a certain *general sort* under *very much the same* circumstances. In assimilating all this experience we are taking a real hazard. And when we proceed later to infer some new truth from our past experience, we are also venturing ahead. These are the points Hume saw fit to emphasise subsequently, in his *Enquiry*. However, they come out clearly enough in his earlier discussion of probability. For every conclusion that is known to be "probable" implies that the conjunctions of certain objects have *not* been constant in the past. There is an actual *contrariety* in our experience. It cannot be simply custom, then, that makes us decide one way or the other, for the custom is really ambiguous in our minds because of the oppositions within our own experience. We may still say, indeed, that some custom is operative on our imagination, as we make our decision, but this immediately determining habit is not the sole factor,—there must be some contrary habit, because there has been an opposite set of junctures of the special objects with which we are concerned. It is imagination alone, then, which prompts our selection of the likely, or probable thing: "Our past experience presents no determinate object; and as our belief, however faint, fixes itself on a determinate object, 'tis evident that the belief arises not merely from the transference of past to future, but from some opera-

tion of the *fancy* conjoined with it. This may lead us to conceive the manner, in which that faculty enters into all our reasonings."[32]

This "genius" of the imagination Hume almost overlooks because of his attention to the element of "determination" in our inference, which will enable him, at last, to define the exact nature of the necessity of a cause. He has been influenced, too, by a desire to exhibit the operations of the mental world as perfectly analogous with those of the physical world which Newton had disclosed in the phenomena of gravitation. And just as gravitation conforms to law, so the movements of ideas and impressions are constant and regular. Thus Hume has devised a *machinery* of association. And the mechanical aspect only too frequently hampers him, in his delineation of the field of his study. Human nature, whether in thought or action, eludes such mechanisms. This Hume realises most distinctly in the case of our reasoning to a probable truth, for he takes little or no occasion to invoke the "association of ideas." Thus it happens that his treatment of probability shows us, more plainly than that of causal inference, the genuinely fresh and constructive proposals of the new theory of knowledge.[33]

At the outset we must recognise, after our discussion of inference and belief, that *proofs* of matter of fact are entirely possible. Hitherto philosophers had divided the operations of reason into two sorts, one yielding knowledge, the other, probability. "Knowledge" is that understanding of a thing which we get by a comparison of ideas, as in the case of pure mathematics and logic. "Probability" is assigned to every conclusion reached by means of experience. But this takes no account of the extraordinary credit we give to our inferences. It fails to discriminate

[32] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 437.

[33] Cf. J. M. Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability*, Macmillan, London, 1921, p. 272: "Hume's sceptical criticisms are usually associated with causality; but argument by induction—inference from past particulars to future generalisations—was the real object of his attack."

between the conclusions to which all our known experience leads us and those about which we still feel some doubt or opposition. A new distinction is, therefore, in order. We shall call "proofs" those arguments by which, on the ground of our experience,[34] we establish the existence of causes and effects. There is nothing very sceptical in this result of the preceding study, that facts and existences may really be proved by causal reasoning. Indeed, Hume has not despaired at all of the possibility of genuinely empirical truth.

We are to scrutinise, now, that reasoning which establishes the probability of the existence of a certain particular object or event. The interesting fact in every such case is that "we can pronounce with certainty, that 'tis more likely and probable." We know the issue to be doubtful to some extent, but our knowledge of this truth is not *itself* dubious. It seems to be *as necessary* a judgment as that which we make from an uncontroverted experience of the constant conjunctions of objects. This suggests the presence of the same kind of necessity or determination as we have discovered in causal inference. If this is so, it will be clear that the determination must be in the mind itself and not in the constant repetition of events in our experience, for these latter conditions are quite indeterminate in all reasoning that is probable, whereas the sense of the necessity and certainty of our judgment of probability is full and complete in itself.

We may commence with a concrete instance of what is called the "probability of chances." Let us suppose ourselves throwing a die and calculating the probability of a certain figure turning up. To simplify the case, let the die be marked by the same number of spots on four of its sides and by another number on the two remaining sides. There will thus be two possibilities with every throw, and the chances may be determined with reference to but two alternative numbers. We affirm it to be more likely that the

[34] *Treatise*, p. 423.

number which is more frequently represented on the sides will appear. We are sure of this probable event. We believe it without any question. What is our process of thought in reaching this conclusion?

We find ourselves contemplating the die and what happens to it—and thinking that some particular side with a number on it *must* appear. The solidity, figure, and gravity of the die bring it under the category of bodies which must fall and retain their figure and lie flat with some side turned upward. Our experience of bodies induces us to expect some such result as this. In other words, we are determined, at the outset, to think of some one side alone as *necessarily* appearing after the throw. We cannot reckon the probability of anything which has no specific existence and no causal relations within our experience. Consequently, we must conceive of a definite effect from our throwing of the die, some effect of the various causes such as the solidity, gravity, cubical shape, etc.—an effect which is readily anticipated by the mind. Indeed, not to look ahead to the eventuality is to run contrary to our experience of objects with these qualities and motions. We cannot restrain this impulse "without a sensible violence." The imagination "feels a kind of impossibility both of stopping short in the way, and of forming any other idea." Hence we are constrained to imagine that some particular side will turn up. But here our thought divides against itself. It cannot fix for any reason or cause upon any of the numerous sides. One side is as good as another, merely as a boundary of the cubical figure. But we find, as we turn the object over in imagination, that one number recurs more frequently than the other, and, in the absence of any other factor to guide us, we determine upon some side having that number which is repeated the more often. The motive of this operation is that "original impulse" of our thought to move forward to a definite event. The repetition of chances serves only to emphasise one idea more than another for a mind which has already been moved to think

some specific effect but cannot determine precisely *which particular effect* to conceive. This means, too, "that what the vulgar call chance is nothing but a secret and concealed cause."[35]

All probability is thus the "probability of causes"—meaning, the likelihood of events in accordance with the precise experience we have had of the objects involved. There are many occasions in ordinary life when we are obliged to determine the probability of a certain fact simply from the greater number of times we have found it in experience. The number of instances counts, then, as it does in the throwing of a die, merely to emphasise one possibility over another to a mind already determined to choose some one as necessary. "We commonly take knowingly into consideration the contrariety of past events; we compare the different sides of the contrariety, and carefully weigh the experiments, which we have on each side." Thus the factor of repetition, or the number of cases, does not of itself *explain* our decision. Though habit is always involved, our conclusions "arise not *directly* from the habit, but in an *oblique* manner."[36] And their obliquity, we shall soon see, is the very genius of our imagination.

It is to be noted, in passing, that Hume speaks of another kind of probability before studying this common form of it. He reminds us here that every argument anticipating the existence of events is an "association of ideas"; and he again lapses into the error of representing this association as produced in the imagination by a habit which is merely a result of the frequent conjunction of objects. It follows that we might have experience of conjunctions which are so infrequent that we have no fully-formed habit and, consequently, no impelling thought or belief concerning them. Yet this supposition is absolutely contrary to the fact which he has himself so greatly empha-

[35] p. 428.
[36] p. 431.

sised, that we have this impulse to infer upon the slightest provocation and even upon witnessing merely a single instance. He seems now to be accounting for that impulse of thought itself from experience. Thus if the impulse is yet feeble our belief is correspondingly weak. But here again he contradicts his very first statement about the truly remarkable feature of our reasoning to probability: our belief in any probability is always as necessary as the belief in a proved fact, for we decisively affirm it *true* that this event is probable. Hume himself shows us this contradiction when he confesses that no one who has reached the age of maturity can any longer be acquainted with this faint sort of belief, which is, therefore, merely supposed to exist in our unremembered infancy. So far as our mature human understanding is considered, such a phenomenon is plainly illusory. Hume did not even mention this sort of probability in the *Enquiry*.[37]

All true probability implies, therefore, a contrariety in our experience. Yet every argument of this kind rests upon the maxim that the past is a standard for the future, a procedure not capable of demonstration by pure reason. There seems to be no principle involved, but only a habit of human thinking. But it is not a habit developed in the course of our experience. "This habit or determination to transfer the past to the future is full and perfect; and consequently the first impulse of the imagination in this species of reasoning is endowed with the same qualities," that is, of completeness. Thus it is a "*perfect* habit, which makes us conclude in general, that instances, of which we have no experience, must necessarily resemble those of which we have." It is virtually an instinct, then, shared by mankind with the animals.[38]

The problem immediately before us is to comprehend

[37] pp. 428-31; cf. *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 48-9, for the omission.
[38] *Treatise*, pp. 432-3 and sec. 16, *Of the Reason of Animals; Enquiry*, sec. 9.

"how we extract a single judgment from a contrariety of past events."[39] Our determination to conceive the future in terms of our past experience is here baffled, apparently, by differences within that experience. It is an impulse, a forward movement of the imagination, reaching toward some specific conception of what is to take place and become fact. It is, however, "broken into pieces" by the various orders of events in terms of which it must anticipate the special event. There are so many instances of one order and so many, more or less, of another. As we think forward, guided by this experience, we cannot do otherwise than keep in mind the exact proportion of these contrary events—and this would never permit us to distinguish one possibility as *the probability*. Experience determines nothing,—yet we decide. And our decision is unmistakably influenced by the preponderance of one order over the other in our experience. It is, then, the mind itself which determines the issue, being still bent upon entertaining some single and definite occurrence, uniform with its experience. We might fancy that the mind, confronted with such contrariety in its experience, would lapse into a despairing indifference or suspense of judgment, but the human mind is not so made.[40] Its determination to give nature definite uniformity is so ingrained that it persists in making some judgment about the future. Thus impelled to conceive something definite and at the same time conformable, as far as can be, with experience, the mind imagines that which is like the greater number of instances. Their frequency counts only to present one alternative more strongly than the others. "Each new experiment is as a new stroke of the pencil, which bestows an additional vivacity on the colors, without either multiplying or enlarging the figure." So we conclude that this possibility is the probable one from our experience, recog-

[39] *Treatise*, p. 431.

[40] Cf. the earlier statement, inconsistent with this position: "The mind in its native situation of indifference." *Treatise*, p. 424.

nising implicitly that the other relations too are still possible and that the course of nature might not actually be what we here anticipate. We believe this probable fact, however, and believe it without hesitation or reserve.

When Hume came to write the *Enquiry* he merely suggested these details about our reasoning to probable truth, as hints to "excite the curiosity of philosophers, and make them sensible how defective all common theories are in treating of such curious and such sublime subjects." We can never be sure why he *omitted* anything from the *Enquiry*, although we have every reason to believe that whatever he added must have represented his more mature opinions. His failure to develop the present theory of probability may have been due either to a suspicion of its adequacy or to a desire to avoid confusing his readers lest they miss the most essential point of his entire philosophy, his demonstration of the non-rational character of all common reasoning. This is his surest title to fame, and Hume well knew it. In fact, even here in the *Treatise*, after presenting a few more subtle arguments in support of his theory, he reverted anxiously to this point, that "*there is nothing in any object, considered in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it*, and, *that even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience.*"[41] The *Enquiry* certainly concentrates on this great discovery. It merely mentions, though very suggestively, that the belief in some particular event as probable comes about "by an inextricable contrivance of nature." Thus it seems as if his silence betokens simply an unwillingness to let his own new views of this instinctive mechanism of the mind detract from our appreciation of the genuine need for some fresh thinking on this whole subject.

But in the *Treatise* Hume actually tried to untangle the

[41] p. 436.

whole affair and make it intelligible. Our difficulty is in seeing how the mere number of instances of certain conjunctions of objects in the past can become a factor in our decision that some event is probably the one that will occur. How can number influence our conception of the relevant object?

The situation is always such where we conceive one object and a second object as both being possible effects of some present set of causes. Though one of them is the probable thing, the other remains, to the end, a distinct possibility. And this means that our thought will run forward to the one as to the other, conceiving both as being in relation to the given data, and in necessary relation, too, since the transition or impulse of thought in either case is perfectly natural. But if our experience has presented us with *more* conjunctions of the one sort than of the other, it has made one related object more vital or impressive. In the absence of any other factor we should naturally fix upon that object, rather than the other, and feel interested in it, and believe in its existence. Consequently we believe in the *likelihood* of this particular event and formulate a judgment concerning it as a fact. This in no way excludes our recognising the alternative relation, or that a contrary state of affairs is still possible. The influence of that past repetition is solely on our *feeling* of the vivacity of our conception, *not* on its *relations*. The essential part of every judgment of probability is that we should apprehend the different relations of things according to our experience, although our eventual belief is itself a single, undivided assent.

Hume goes still deeper into the operation. He examines the way in which a number of instances actually come to represent a single or general course of events. In our experience we do not have exactly the same thing occurring over and over again, but somewhat different ones constantly appearing with certain others which resemble each other and seem to be of one sort. We actually have ex-

perience of many varied events, but we think of them as constituting a *type of event*. And whenever we infer the coming of some new object, we have in mind "one conclusion," and not "a multitude of similar ones."[42] This means that we generalise, without deliberation at all, to a single order from a great many events. In assimilating these different views to each other we find the resultant conception strong and clear. The diverse perceptions which make up our past experience of this single order concur, so that we feel a *belief* whenever we afterwards make an inference on the basis of our generalisation. And if there are contrary similarities in our experience, they only serve to diminish the *force* of whatever conclusion we eventually draw, without in the least obliterating our knowledge of those other relations. Thus the effect of repetition or number of instances is *not to give or to take away any relation* between things but only to influence the mind in its fixing upon the particular object it *will* believe. And frequency of conjunction would enjoy no such efficacy were not the mind itself originally endowed with an impulse to transfer the past to the future, an impulse which actually keeps it appreciative of all sorts of alternatives and thus renders some external factor, like the sheer repetition in events, indispensable to its arriving at some definite conclusion. The whole operation depends, then, upon our assimilative imagination. The habits of our thought are the specific forms in which this instinct in the mind itself has been confirmed through the events of our experience. They represent the impulse to generalisation in so far as it has been successful in the past, and when we reason from them to any new conclusions, whether probable or certain, we are still moving forward in thought, imaginatively advancing our acquaintance with nature.

It is at this point that Hume remarks upon the exceeding difficulty of his theory about all our reasoning from experience, and reminds us that no existing view of the

[42] p. 435.

subject is in any way adequate to the phenomena. Common opinion makes "reason" the source of all such inferences and even of our arguments to the likelihood of certain facts or events. But we cannot discover anything in the objects presented to us to justify our drawing a conclusion regarding what is distinct from them in time and place. Even assuming that we have had experience of occurrences wherein objects are conjoined, we do not reason, either when we form a conception of some law or general type of event, or when we apply it to the new situation before us and conceive the certain or probable existence of some distinctly new thing. The maxim underlying all this activity of mind is one which neither logic nor experience enables us to ascertain. We have no alternative, therefore, but to ascribe it to the inherent nature of our human imagination. It is a natural impulse to transfer the past to the future, or to assimilate all events to each other so that the course of nature seems uniform. This assimilation goes on at every moment of our lives. It is unconsciously operating and forming definite habits of mind. Only in the marginal cases, where we are obliged to reflect because these habits oppose each other, do we realise that our imagination plays such a rôle in their development and exercise. For experience alone determines upon no particular object, but offers a great diversity of possible ones, while imagination takes in that variety of similar experiences and uses it as a general rule for the advancement of our knowledge, and conceives some determinate object as the fact that is more probable in the situation before us. From this striking case we may learn, Hume finally announces, just how it is that our imagination "enters into all our reasonings."

It is a corollary to this position that if the "multitude of views or glimpses of an object proceeds not from experience, but from a voluntary act of the imagination," it does not give rise to definite belief, or at least to very little belief. Hume still inclines, in giving that alternative, to

regard "custom and education" as effectual by themselves in virtue of the element of "repetition." But he adds, that such indoctrination "requires a long tract of time, along with a very frequent and *undesigned* repetition." This stresses the involuntary character of the formation of all belief. And a further aspect emerges when we are informed that artificial repetition of ideas must be ineffectual to the production of a genuine belief because "each act of the mind, being separate and independent, has a separate influence, and joins not its force with that of its fellows. Not being united by any common object, producing them, they have no relation to each other; and consequently make no transition or union of forces."[43] But there is not in any case an object *common* to a number of distinct perceptions.[44] It is the imagination alone which unites perceptions and gives them a community, or association with each other. Thus it appears, once more, that no belief can arise apart from that fundamental activity of the mind which naturally and involuntarily *gives relation to* our perceptions.

The native tendency of the mind shows itself in several other operations of the understanding. When we reason by "analogy" with experience we are presuming that nature is uniform with itself at all times. We are conscious of our hazard, for we acknowledge that the resemblance between our present object and the general type is somewhat slighter than we should wish. It seems doubtful whether we *ought* to argue from this imperfectly assimilated object to another specific object which is usually conjoined with this type in our experience. Other similarities naturally occur to us, whose import, we suspect, we may not fully appreciate. To some extent, then, it is even arbitrary to regard any one of these resemblances as more significant than the others. The effect of this conscious-

[43] pp. 437-8.
[44] Above, p. 108, and below, pp. 253, 273.

ness of our own choice in the decision is to make our belief less certain than what arises from causal inference or even from our reasoning to a probability.

There are still other acts of thought useful in common life, though not in philosophy. They are not dignified with the title of "reasoning." Sometimes we argue from an initial fact which we merely remember to be such. It is natural, then, that the diminished force of all memories would show in the resulting inference, whatever it may be. Hence we often find a variation in the degree of certainty in our belief, according as "the fact is recent or remote." Again, the original vividness of any present fact will make some difference in the quality of our conviction. Furthermore, if a true "proof" happens to involve very extensive argument, consisting of subordinate inferences, it may lose its force from the very intricacy and difficulty of the reasoning. These operate like contrariety within past experience, to detract from our certainty of the conclusion, though not from our understanding of the fact.

Incidentally, Hume takes note that these observations might be cited by some in derogation of the "science" of history. How can we feel any assurance about a remote fact such as the existence of a person called Julius Cæsar? Will not the successive handing on of the original evidence even by means of a written record, so diminish the reality of the fact as to make it scarcely credible? This had already been urged against the authenticity of the Christian tradition. But Hume, the future historian, regards the objection in general as contrary to sound sense. There are, it is true, innumerable steps in the passing on of such a record. They do not affect our belief, however, for we think of the reporting of eye-witnesses, the copying, and the printing, as all events of the same sort, namely, the transcription of evidence. Our belief in any narration rests, then, upon our own experience of human motives, and particularly those that make for the veracity of writers and publishers. It is this general knowledge of mankind

today which "preserves the evidence of history" for us.

There is one remaining kind of "unphilosophical probability," prejudice. From a single example of an Irishman who is not witty we tend to believe that no Irishman possesses real wit, and likewise we may conclude that no Frenchman has genuine solidity of character. Instead of waiting for a considerable experience we form at once a "general rule." Subsequently, we may find our generalisation to be unwarranted. It is based upon "accidental circumstances," not "essential" ones. And because we correct this opinion by further intercourse with others, we speak of our final judgment as the truth and of the first one as our "prejudice." We tend to see in prejudice the "capricious and uncertain" exercise of our fancy. In fact, however, both judgments have their source in the same quality of the human mind. Our tendency to generalise is always itself pre-judging. The true opinions are only those that are "more general" than prejudices. They are rendered "authentic," therefore, by virtue of that very "principle of human nature" which has seemed, at first sight, so subversive of all knowledge, because of its rash presumptions.

A *philosophical* sceptic will contemplate this scene with some degree of satisfaction. For it is a tradition of his school that human reason is ever contradicting and subverting itself and that man still gets along in the practical business of life by the use of this curious faculty. Our propensity to bring everything under some rule precipitates us into errors and prejudices, but it is so persistent in our life that it enables us to rectify our own mistakes by means of the extensive body of ordered experience which it alone makes available to us.[45]

Here, then, is the essential character of our reasoning in all its phases, from causal inference to the trivial opinions of prejudice. A certain bent of the mind, or *determination*, makes order in the events of life by carrying forward into

[45] p. 446; *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 87 n.

our perception of the moment the special arrangements of our own past, and inducing us to foresee events to come in terms of these definite orders. Even the imaginative collecting of many conjunctions of objects in time and place into the specific types or rules of experience is the work of this *impulse*. The mind operates, naturally, to assimilate objects and events to each other. The resulting generalisations from our experience become the confirmed habits of our thought, subsisting in our minds. And it is always one of these habits which immediately determines us, on occasion, to infer the existence of some new object from one now present to us. Our inference is a conception of something *similar* to what we have usually found in *like* relations of contiguity and succession with the present *type* of object. We naïvely suppose, indeed, that we are directed to that conception by a discernible "necessary connection." When we begin to suspect our insight into that "necessity," we take refuge in "experience"—it seems to be the past which shows us what the future *must* be. But we cannot understand why the past determines anything with regard to a reality which is not yet made known to us. We find this out when we realise that there are many contrarieties in our past experience itself, and that these warrant us only in asserting the probability of some event. And still the "necessity" is there—we *determine* even what is merely probable, as well as what is entirely certain. For all these activities of our understanding we have to suppose, therefore, an inherent *determination* of the mind, belonging to every act, and revealed nowhere in the objects about which we thus reason.

This determination of the mind is the source of our idea of causal necessity. Hume expects such a paradox to meet with "inveterate prejudices of mankind."[46] For necessity appears to us, in our unreflective moments, as something *with* the objects of our perception; it *confronts* us like any sheer fact of nature. To say that it has no reality in and

[46] *Treatise*, p. 460 *f.*

among objects seems to deny the existence of all causation whatsoever. But Hume has not pretended to make "causes" illusory, or even to deprive the operations of nature of their independence. He has simply pointed out an unexpected origin for the idea of causality. The determination of the mind is an "impression," not a sense impression, but an "impression of reflection."[47] It is the *feeling* of the mind's own way, or *manner*, of operating. Such a feeling is natural and entirely independent of the human will, for it comes with the inference or "association" whose very character it is to be determined without a conscious direction of the mind. This feeling pervades the act of thought from beginning to end, as the "necessity" of the connection and as the "belief" in the conclusion. So it is truly an ineluctable fact. But "the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects," so that we tend to envisage both the "necessary connection" and the "power" of force *in* the objects. We seem, then, to be arguing, in every inference, from a bond of unity clearly discerned and not merely felt. And to this we add another confusion, which Hume noticed later, in the *Enquiry*—the ascribing of our "animal *nisus*" in bodily action to every operation of physical nature. This "power" of producing change and that "tie" or unity between objects or events we cannot, however, bring to light. Nevertheless, we may, indeed we must, consider nature to be a causal order. Despite all the philosophical difficulties, this relation of cause and effect remains a "natural relation." It is a determination of our own human nature, inevitable for us in all our thought and action, and effective in our application of it to the events of life.

The new meaning of causality comes out when we look back to previous notions of philosophers. Some had fancied "power" and "agency" to be simple deliverances of sense perception or inner feeling. But the Cartesians learned that the whole compass of our perceptible world is matter and

[47] p. 451 *f.*

motion—they knew that the moving power or force is nowhere discoverable in the realm of physical nature. Others had recourse, then, to our consciousness of activity: we "will" to move our body and we know power, then, in the carrying out of our volition. Yet, as Malebranche showed, this consciousness of our agency reveals nothing of the producing energy for that physical action. We have merely the consciousness of our intention followed by a perception of the ensuing event—a mere conjunction, not a necessary connection. In fact, we are normally ignorant of some very essential factors which are intermediate between our purpose and the deed, namely, the activity of the nerves and muscles. The result of this criticism by Malebranche is to convince us thoroughly that we do not know what power or causation is, whether in our own minds or in the objects of our perception.

So far Malebranche had advanced, and then "got into fairyland" before he achieved an adequate theory of the nature of cause and effect.[48] He believed causation to be real, though not as a character of material objects or of human consciousness—hence it is only real in God. It is the will of God, incomprehensible to us, yet working in such a way, both in ourselves and in the world at large, that we can live and think as if we knew the veritable Power that moves all things, even including our own thoughts. This vision of the Divine humbles us, for we see ourselves to be merely the occasions, whenever we "will" our actions, for the Omnipotent Being to show His Power. Otherwise, this theory is of no value to us, even for our religion. We might plausibly contend that such All-Power could rule whilst delegating a clearly free agency to man and without reducing his will to the sheer, ineffectual consciousness of what is coming to pass by a Divine ordination, and that an All-Wise Power would start off the world in its beginning with all the ends to be realised, determining, then and there, the whole subsequent course of nature,

[48] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 60.

without need of such Wisdom and Power actively present at every moment. At any rate, the opinion of Malebranche is too extravagant to elicit genuine conviction. We know what God is only by analogy with our own experience and we ought not attribute real power or causation to Him, if we have no distinct idea of it anywhere, in ourselves or in perceived objects. Malebranche recognises the need of some new account of causality, but he fails to satisfy us by carrying our thought into the shadowy and uncertain realm of the incomprehensible.

Hume admires the caution of Newton in dealing with this conception of power or force. Newton described the experience of mankind in regard to the continuance of a body in its state of rest or uniform motion and he formulated a law of this experience. Here is one fact. It is also a fact that a body newly-impelled into motion acquires as much motion, in proportion to its mass, as the impelling body loses. In speaking of these facts thus understood he referred to the "force" of inertia in these bodies. He used the term, also, with respect to gravity. But he had no intention of treating these forces or energies as absolute realities. They are conceptions needed to interpret what we observe in the physical world. Power is thus a "relative" thing. "When we consider the *unknown* circumstance of an object, by which the degree or quantity of its effect is fixed and determined, we call that its power."[49] It is something not known in its own nature.

In the spirit of Newton, then, Hume delineates the true and precise meaning of causation for philosophy.[50] It has exact significance only in two circumstances, one, the experience of similar instances of events constantly conjoined with each other, the other our habit of mind which moves us to infer a new event from a present one according to our experience of the kinds of events which usually occur together in time and place. These two features ex-

[49] *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 60-1, 64; cf. Newton, *Principia*, *Def.* 3, p. 6.
[50] *Essays*, pp. 63 *f.*; cf. *Treatise*, pp. 457, 463 *f.*

haust all we can know about causation. Consequently we should define a "cause" in terms either of what is outwardly discernible or of our mental habit. Thus a cause is "*an object, followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second*, or, in other words, *where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed.*" Again, having regard to the mind's attitude, a "cause" is "*an object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other.*" In the language of the *Treatise*, the first definition deals with causation as a "*philosophical* relation"—if we want to know how to compare ideas so as to discover causes or effects, we must consider the objects in their relations of "precedency and contiguity" in time and place, according as we have known various instances of those relations. The second definition treats causation as a "*natural* relation"—it is a phenomenon of the association of ideas, a natural process which we individuals are not at liberty either to prevent or to set in operation, by any deliberate action. The remarkable thing about both definitions is that they do not represent to us what causation is in itself. Causation is *relative* both to the character of physical events and to the nature of the human mind. It is this conclusion which entitles Hume to liken his study of the world of knowledge to Newton's study of the world of matter and motion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The External World of Objects

THE philosopher must look upon our common knowledge of the world with considerable scepticism. Every application of our reason and experience to the events of nature is devoid of any guidance of logic. Such an act of thought is always a venture. We never know what we truly ought to believe, but only what we cannot help believing. "Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connection with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine." True, we can always view things differently, as when some other phases of our experience suggest an alternative so that we find no "effort of thought" in attending to it, and consequently proceed to our altered belief by a "natural and easy" step. Even such sceptical reflections as we have been entertaining in this study may displace our primary and natural belief. But in the long run life itself thrusts aside these special motives and compels us to reason and believe with other men. As philosophers we can do nothing wiser than inquire what the common beliefs of mankind actually are, and how they arise out of our human experience.[1]

Hume had been studying the truth of religion when he first saw the light that opened up to him his new enterprise. In particular, he had scrutinised the writings of Berkeley. Here was a philosopher who denied the existence of matter and then argued from identically the same evidence to the reality of God. Hume knows that this argument consti-

[1] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 474-8.

tutes no proof in the true sense of the word. He does not deny the fact of human belief in Deity, since it is manifest everywhere and arises from something in experience. But what does that evidence cited by Berkeley for his own convictions really lead us to believe? It means something, else the various philosophers would not refer to it as the warrant for their differing views of Matter and God. Hume tries, therefore, to define the natural belief of the common people. And he conceives it to be as follows: a world of objects exists, continuing beyond our perception, and independent, and external to ourselves. How this belief springs up in our life is the problem to which the next portion of the *Treatise* is devoted.

The solution is dictated by the reading and thinking that had led Hume to his investigations into human nature. Montaigne drew attention to our usual belief that objects have a permanent existence, and pointed out that reason cannot establish it.[2] Hobbes suggested what kind of process is involved in this belief: the mind of man presumes upon a regularity of nature beyond anything we can observe, not only taking the future to resemble the past, but the past to be more completely uniform in its existence than we can remember from experience. And Malebranche definitely ascribed this presumption or "natural judgment" to our imagination. The belief in objects existing independently of our perception but continuing just as we perceive them is analogous to our belief in causes. It was, doubtless, this analogy which inspired Hume with the idea that some "principle of human nature" is everywhere at work in these significant phases of our human understanding. His own task was to discover whether any of the

[2] In the conclusion to *Apologie de Raimond Sebonde*: "Finalement, il n'y a aulcune constante existence, n'y de nostre être, n'y de celui des objects; et nous, et nostre jugement, et toutes choses mortelles, vont coulant et roulant sans cesse: ainsi, il ne se peut établir rien de certain de l'un à l'aultre, et le jugeant et le jugé estants en continuelle mutation et bransle. . . . La raison qui y cherche une reelle subsistance, se treuve deçue, ne pouvant rien apprehender de subsistant et permanent."

three known principles of association is involved in this common belief.

We are to study how "children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induced to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others." There must be certain features in the appearance of our perceptions to occasion such belief. By the theory, these discernible qualities of the things only concur with a peculiar, inherent tendency of our imagination which is the ultimate factor in producing the belief.[3]

But we need, first, to eliminate all possibilities of our deriving this belief either from reason or from the senses. It is fairly common to argue that we infer the reality of external objects simply from the presence of our perceptions, which seem to require something distinct from themselves to cause them in us. The proper condition for causal inference is this, however, that we know things similar to both the cause and the effect, in our experience. Here, we reason, therefore, to the existence of causes for these perceptions which are radically distinct from them. Whatever the inference to objects may be, it is not causal reasoning. In short, we have no proof, by strict argument, for the reality of an external world.

Nor do we have a direct sense impression of an objective reality. It is quite obvious that no sensation can give us the existence of something continuing beyond itself. It is not capable, moreover, of showing us anything absolutely distinct from ourselves, for the distinguishing of the object from ourselves would involve the perceiving of the self, too, as an object, which is even more difficult to find than what we are here seeking. We might think, however, that we have a perception of things as external, at least, to our own bodies, which could then serve as the foundation for our idea of objects existing independently of ourselves. But all we know of our body is given us in some impression

[3] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 483-4, 486-7, 497-8.

along with the impressions of other bodies—and our question here would be: how do we distinguish between those of our own body and those of what is essentially external? It is the same problem as that with which we are already dealing. Moreover, we ascribe an external and independent existence to certain impressions like sound, taste, and smell, although we cannot locate them in space with reference to our visible and tangible body. And even visual impressions do not convey distance or "outness" to us as a datum, as Berkeley had shown. Thus the supposed evidence of our senses for an external and independent order of objects is illusory.

A true theory must take account of several aspects of this situation which philosophers have hitherto neglected. Our sense impressions are of three kinds. There are the impressions of figure, bulk, motion, and solidity; of colors, tastes, smells, sounds, heat and cold; and lastly, of pains and pleasures. These different kinds exist in the same manner, that is, they come and go together. Color coexists with figure in our idea of an extended thing, and pain or pleasure comes with taste or smell or color. In the sensations themselves we can discover no ground for any distinction in their manner of existence. Yet the unreflective man will not attribute to pain or pleasure the objective reality of things outside himself. And the philosopher even denies such reality to the secondary qualities of color and taste, leaving only the primary ones of motion, mass, and figure as the true aspects of the external world. What we need to understand is how such distinctions can arise, first in our naïve view of things, and then for the philosopher, with his critical study.

We go back now to the description Berkeley had given of our world of sense perception, from which he argued to the reality of a spirit beyond that world. The ideas of sense present themselves without any "dependence on *my* will," and are "strong, lively and distinct" in themselves,

and exhibit a "steadiness, order, and coherence" among themselves.[4] By contrast with the feebler images of our thinking and the relatively arbitrary order in which we think them, these strong, involuntary, and orderly ideas betoken something else besides themselves, and besides us who perceive them, namely, the powerful, wise, and good Will of God. But Hume already knows how little we are acquainted with power, in the form either of our own will or of any force in the impressions presented to us. And as he studies the situation, he discerns that both the involuntary nature and the strength of the impressions are unessential to our belief in their objective existence. For pains and pleasures are equally beyond our own power of control and they are actually more violent than those impressions we have of color, figure, or motion. Yet we do not attribute an external reality to pleasure or pain. It follows that vividness and force are not the distinctive qualities in the appearance of things which induce us to imagine their existence as objects.

The remaining features of that description by Berkeley are alone of influence in the production of our belief. What we call objects appear with a "peculiar *constancy*." "Those mountains, and houses, and trees, which lie at present under my eye, have always appeared to me in the same order; . . . My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner, and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them." But this constancy is never perfect or absolute. The order of appearance often changes. Things alter not only in their position but also in their qualitative nature. Yet we find "that even in these changes they preserve a *coherence*, and have a regular dependence on each other." Thus "when I return to my chamber after an hour's absence, I find not my fire in the same situation, in which I left it: but then I am accustomed in other instances to see a like alteration produced in a like time, whether I am

[4] *Principles*, secs. 29-30, and secs. 18, 33.

present or absent, near or remote. This coherence, therefore, in their changes is one of the characteristics of external objects, as well as their constancy."[5]

It is the regularity here which is important. When objects are not always exactly the same in appearance and order, they do not, on that account, seem to be different things without any relation to each other. We understand their very alterations in terms of our experience of similar events in the past. In short, we are not in the least obliged to abandon our presumption that all events take place in accordance with the causal laws of our own experience. This regularity or uniformity of nature we never find ourselves compelled, by any observations, to relinquish.

It is that very strong impulse to maintain such uniformity throughout nature which makes us conceive an objective world. It is "in order to preserve the same dependence and connection, of which we have had experience," that we suppose the continued existence of these objects of our experience. Without this supposition they "lose, in a great measure, the regularity of their operation," which we must hold to at any cost. We see how this is so from a homely illustration of common life.

"I am here seated in my chamber with my face to the fire; and all the objects, that strike my senses, are contained in a few yards around me. My memory, indeed, informs me of the existence of many objects; but then this information extends not beyond their past existence, nor do either my senses or memory give any testimony to the continuance of their being. When therefore I am thus seated, and revolve over these thoughts, I hear on a sudden a noise as of a door turning upon its hinges; and a little after see a porter, who advances towards me. This gives occasion to many new reflections and reasonings. First, I never have observed, that this noise could proceed from

[5] *Treatise*, pp. 484-5; cf. Descartes, *Sixth Meditation*, end.

anything but the motion of a door; and therefore conclude, that the present phenomenon is a contradiction to all past experience, unless the door, which I remember on the other side of the chamber, be still in being. Again, I have always found, that a human body was possessed of a quality, which I call gravity, and which hinders it from mounting in the air, as this porter must have done to arrive at my chamber, unless the stairs I remember be not annihilated by my absence. But this is not all. I receive a letter, which upon opening it I perceive by the handwriting and subscription to have come from a friend, who says he is two hundred leagues distant. 'Tis evident I can never account for this phenomenon, conformable to my experience in other instances, without spreading out in my mind the whole sea and continent between us, and supposing the effects and continued existence of posts and ferries, according to my memory and observation. To consider these phenomena of the porter and letter in a certain light, they are contradictions to common experience, and may be regarded as objections to those maxims, which we form concerning the connections of causes and effects. I am accustomed to hear such a sound, and see such an object in motion [the door] at the same time. I have not received in this particular instance both these perceptions. These observations are contrary [to experience], unless I suppose that the door still remains, and that it was opened without my perceiving it: and this supposition, which was at first entirely arbitrary and hypothetical, acquires a force and evidence by its being the only one, upon which I can reconcile these contradictions. There is scarce a moment of my life, wherein there is not a similar instance presented to me, and I have not occasion to suppose the continued existence of objects, in order to connect their past and present appearances, and give them such an union with each other, as I have found by experience to be suitable to their particular natures and circumstances. Here then I am naturally led to regard the world, as something real and

durable, and as preserving its existence, even when it is no longer present to my perception."

To account for the actual event we must suppose the existence of things which would suffice, in terms of our experience, to bring the event into existence. Without a door and stairway, the presence of the porter would be anomalous. But the porter presents to us a letter recognised to come from a friend known to be in distant parts, and this we can understand only by conceiving the various things necessary to its transportation to the house. Now to make these things conceivable, we must suppose that they have been in existence all the time. For we cannot ascertain the causality step by step, observing the precise time and place of each successive effect. All we know directly is the immediate appearance of the porter with the letter, and we must "spread out" those past existences without defining just how and when they operated to bring about this event. Thus we suppose not merely their causal efficacy but their continued existence to make that causality possible. Our thought is of a "world" of objects enduring and real, so that we shall not find it necessary to admit occurrences without causes.

Yet this conception of a world of objects is not a causal inference. It is itself something more than a straightforward inference. It arises from our experience of constant conjunctions "in an indirect and oblique manner." This was the description Hume had also given of reasoning to the probability of some event. In that case there is seen a native determination of the mind to transfer the past to the future or to presume that the future resembles the past. It is an impulse to make nature absolutely uniform, to see the coming event as the regular outcome of experience. This same impulse is at work, apparently, in the present act of understanding: "Whenever we infer the continued existence of the objects of sense from their coherence, and the frequency of their union, 'tis in order to bestow on the objects a greater regularity than what is ob-

served in our mere perceptions. We remark a connection betwixt two kinds of objects in their past appearance to the senses, but are not able to observe this connection to be perfectly constant, since the turning about of our head or the shutting of our eyes is able to break it. What then do we suppose in this case, but that these objects still continue their usual connection, notwithstanding their apparent interruption, and that the irregular appearances are joined by something, of which we are insensible?" We take the regularity with which we are familiar to be absolutely perfect. We make the past appearance not only the rule for the future but for all nature, regardless of distinctions of time,—even conceiving that objects exist and produce effects when we have no direct information about them.

The imagination is the source of this presumptive act of thought. It is everywhere the phase of mind which advances beyond experience. Even our conception of a perfect or objective standard in mathematics exhibits this truth. "I have already observed, in examining the foundation of mathematics, that the imagination, when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse. This I have assigned for the reason, why, after considering several loose standards of equality, and correcting them by each other, we proceed to imagine so correct and exact a standard of that relation, as is not liable to the least error or variation." Now "objects have a certain coherence even as they appear to our senses; but this coherence is much greater and more uniform, if we suppose the objects to have a continued existence; and as the mind is once in the train of observing an uniformity among objects, it naturally continues, till it renders the uniformity as complete as possible. The simple supposition of their continued existence suffices for this purpose, and gives us a notion of a

much greater regularity among objects, than what they have when we look no farther than our senses."

In the case of reasoning to a probability it appeared that our belief founded on an experience not entirely constant is less effectual than that which arises from an uncontroverted experience. Here we find it inevitable and natural for us to conceive of objects permanently existing and connected with each other in a system, not from any immediate evidence of such absolute order and continuance but only from a certain degree of regularity in their appearances. Such a belief in the existence of an external world must likewise be inferior in its force to the belief we repose in any proved fact. If we do *firmly* believe in independent objects, therefore, we must be influenced by an additional factor, which is the "constancy" in the appearances of our perceptions.

Things appear, again and again, "with like parts and in a like order." Their similarity in order—that is, the constancy of their conjunction—we have already considered, but not the resemblance in qualities of the things themselves. It is this fact, however, which now seems to be involved in our conception of external objects. We regard these objects, not as so many *different* things bearing like relations, but as the *same identical things* persisting in time and invariably connected with each other in a system, the external world. Their resemblances occasion this idea of their identity. But we must first inquire what identity really means to us, and then how we come to attribute it to the objects of our perception.

It is clear that identity can have no meaning where there is no more than one object apparent to us. To say that an object is "the same with itself" has no point unless the "object" and what we refer to as "itself" are in some way different from each other. Identity is not reducible to the mere unity of a perception. On the other hand, a multiplicity of perceptions, no matter how much alike they may

be, is also not what we have in mind when we use the term "identity." It is hard, then, to find any meaning for identity. "To remove this difficulty, let us have recourse to the idea of time or duration." A succession of objects to our perception gives us the idea of time. So inseparable is time from our perception of events that we even conceive time to pass when we contemplate an object which does not noticeably change or disclose any of its parts in succession. Strictly speaking, time is irrelevant to a really unchangeable object. But we are aware of time from changes in objects coexistent with the unchanging one and we naturally conceive that it applies to the latter as well as to the former. This "fiction of the imagination almost universally takes place." And to it we owe our notion of identity. A single object before us without any perceivable interruption or change in its existence seems to endure in time and is called the *same* object. This making of time universal by our imagination enables us to interpret those features of unity and multiplicity which we first noticed in the "idea" of identity. If we take one moment of the time and simultaneously think of a later moment, we have the notion of a number of things, and this attaches to our conception of the object itself which exists during that period of time. On the other hand, we may imagine ourselves moving along with the passage of time "without any *variation* or *interruption* in the object," in which case we think only of the unity of the time itself and, correspondingly, of the singleness of the object in it. The identity of an object is thus the unity it has in a diversity which the order of time conveys to us, although that order of time itself *ought* to be based upon an actual change observed in the object. Imagining time to be real beyond the limiting conditions of perception, we attribute to every object which exhibits no variation or interruption in its appearance this aspect of identity.[6]

Identity has no existence, then, apart from the "act or

[6] Cf. Berkeley, *Dialogues*, Vol. I, pp. 463-9.

operation of the mind" which gives time-relations to objects even when they show no changes. It is like the necessity of a connection between objects—dependent upon our imaginative human nature. It reflects not what we actually perceive in or among objects but our "disposition" or manner of regarding those objects. And this disposition of the mind is inseparable from our perception. We naturally think of single objects as one and the same with themselves in a duration whose very existence, even, presupposes genuine differences within it. Their perfect identity *seems*, nevertheless, to be actually a datum of our perception.

This disposition of the mind as it represents identity to itself is not unlike that which it has when assimilating different things that recur again and again in a known duration, or actual time. In the case of a true identity it is the difference which is not discoverable by any analysis: the unity is in the unchanging object. But here we are given different things appearing with like parts in like order—and our imagination makes these resembling things into a unity despite the reality of the duration which always implies genuine change and difference. The operation of the mind is very much the same, however, in both cases: it attributes to a diversity of occurrences in time a unity continuing throughout them. Even our feeling is recognisably similar, the sense of smooth and easy transition. And here we confront a fact, of which there are instances in our life of feeling and action, an "association" of dispositions themselves, whenever they are similar in *tendency*. Thus we ascribe to similar things constantly reappearing in our lives a real identity such as we attribute to an unchanging object in time. These things seem to have an existence absolutely continuous, despite their varied appearances. We conceive them to be permanently existing because our mental dispositions are integral to our understanding of the situation. It is only the anatomising philosopher who can distinguish these separate tendencies

of the imagination both from the things perceived and from each other. Our naïve impulse is to see the objects of perception as true identities existing without interruption in time.[7]

Straightway the mind of the common man falls into perplexity,—which it resolves at once, without reflection, and quite by impulse. The fact of time is so real that it makes us aware of the equally real interruptions in the occurrence of these perceptions. We recognise that these seemingly unvarying objects are only resembling perceptions, constantly brought before us, but with intervals. This contradicts our impulsive view of them as absolutely identical with themselves throughout time. We imagine, therefore, that while they actually do continue in existence identical with themselves, they appear in our perception only at certain periods. Our conception of objects thus comprises both their continuity of existence *as* perceived and their distinctness, or independence *of* our perception. This is our human understanding of the external world.

It is important to realise that such a notion of commonsense is not patently false. There is no necessity of logic to compel us to think that an object must be non-existent when it is not present to a mind. So far as our analytic reason is concerned "what we call a *mind*, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity." When one of these perceptions is conceived to be withdrawn from that union of diversely related perceptions, nothing need be concluded about either the existence or non-existence of this particular perception. The previous relation to a total group of other perceptions does not constitute its whole reality. It *may* still continue to exist unperceived. And likewise, when a perception makes its first appearance to a mind, it need not be considered then a sheer crea-

[7] *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 490-3, especially footnote.

tion out of nothing. It might have been in existence before being perceived. And our perceiving of it would mean simply that we find this thing acquiring a relation to other things in our mind and thus influencing the mind in its operations about its ideas. For to perceive is but to discover relevance in something new. The object could truly exist, then, before we perceive it. So the usual opinion of a permanent reality of objects independent of our perception is entirely possible.

Still, this is not merely an opinion—it is a confirmed belief. As things recur with like parts in a like order, their past appearances survive in our memory with something of the force of an impression. Now the resemblance between past and present is a "natural relation." We naturally feel the different things to be one and the same thing persisting throughout time, for we make no effort of the mind to think this identity. We are impelled by a "propensity" native to the mind. And this very inclination operates further to make us imagine the continued existence of these objects "in order to justify this identity, and avoid the contradiction, in which the interrupted appearance of these perceptions seems necessarily to involve us." Wherever the mind runs forward so naturally to its conceptions, it carries over the forceful character of initial impressions of memory or sense to the eventual idea it forms; thus we not only think that objects exist in their own right, distinct from our perceptions, but actually *believe* it.

The significant factor in our belief is the impulsive disposition of our imagination. This alone accounts for the supposed identity of the different appearances and for the continuity which we conceive because we are bent upon having a perfect unity and regularity notwithstanding apparent breaks in the existence of these things for us. And this explains, too, why it is that we may ascribe such continued existence even to things "which are perfectly new to us, and of whose constancy and coherence we have no experience." If such things present themselves to us in a

"manner" similar to that of the constant and coherent objects, they are conceived with a like disposition of mind, and thus are believed to be really external objects.

Hume regards this account as "a consistent system, which is perfectly convincing."[8] It shows the origin of the "*common opinion*" by taking the mind of man "in its *common* situation." It reveals the ultimate "principles of human nature" involved in such a belief. With these in view, we can appreciate how this "opinion has taken such deep root in the imagination, that 'tis impossible ever to eradicate it," and that no metaphysical opinions about the dependence of objects upon our perception will suffice to disabuse us of it.

Philosophers will have some difficulty, of course, with this native belief. They find themselves thinking like other people—attributing a continued existence to objects and supposing, as a consequence of this belief, that these objects are independent of their perception. They cannot combat their nature in its very first impulses. But this "independence" of the objects they are able to examine and question. For the plain fact of experience is "that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits."[9] Instead of concluding that a continued, as well as an independent reality of objects is impossible, philosophers compromise, however, with a new system which is only a palliative, and even raises greater problems than it solves. It distinguishes absolutely between objects which exist in and by themselves and perceptions which exist only in the mind. This position is plausible, indeed, for it only expands upon our natural view of the situation. Unless we already believe that what we immediately perceive are the objects and that these per-

[8] pp. 497, 500, 502.

[9] *Treatise*, p. 498; cf. Montaigne, *Apology*, "Il est certain que nostre apprehension, nostre jugement, et les facultez de nostre âme, en general, souffrent selon les mouvements et alterations du corps, lesquelles alterations sont continuelles."

ceived objects are the very ones which continue to exist even when we are not present to perceive them, we should never think of such a "double existence" of objects and perceptions. For if we started knowing we had only perceptions we could never reach independent objects by any process of reasoning or causal inference. There is nothing, however, in such an hypothesis to commend it at first sight to the imagination. It arises simply because we are reflecting upon our experience and belief. We are reckoning with the admitted dependence of objects in the face of our original opinion of their real continuance in existence and consequent independence of our perception. But we stop short at challenging the continuity of their existence, and we *must* do so, else we should not conceive of *objects* at all. Some "few extravagant sceptics" may be logical to the very end and argue that such experience of dependence makes even the reality of the objects impossible. But most philosophers hold to a position which they are unwittingly led to adopt "by a kind of instinct or natural impulse." They cannot honestly deny the independent and continued existence of the objects which they perceive. Hence their compromise —a "philosophical system," "the monstrous offspring of two principles, which are contrary to each other, which are both at once embraced by the mind, and which are unable mutually to destroy each other." They cannot avoid *arguing* from our experience of the dependence of all objects upon our human perception; they are equally incapable of suspecting their impulsive conception of a world of objects existing distinct from perception. Thus there must be permanent objects, and at the same time, perceptions *of* them, transitory and peculiar to the situation of our mind.

Even the details of this philosophical theory betray the presence of imagination. The view is formulated as the doctrine of representative perception. We think of the external objects as resembling our perceptions. No reason can be assigned for this thought. It is clearly the work of

imagination which assimilates everything to that with which it is familiar. Again, "we take it for granted, that every particular object resembles that perception which it causes." This again is impulsive, for we have seen that the causal relation is not strictly relevant here—yet, having conceived of objects as distinct from perceptions, we tend to see them related in the very way in which perceptions themselves are connected in our experience. And, further, "we have a strong propensity to complete every union by joining new relations to those which we have before observed betwixt any ideas," so that we endow these objects and the perceptions with the additional relation of exact similarity. Thus objects are supposed to produce in our mind perceptions truly like them, though we *mean* by "objects" a kind of reality absolutely different in nature from the perceptions with which we are acquainted in our consciousness.

Hume gives vent here to a sceptical uneasiness. He has started with a certain implicit conviction regarding the external world. Studying the situation of man he has singled out the coherence and constancy of the appearance of things as the features which could alone give rise to such a belief. It has seemed natural that mankind would conceive of a continued order of objects simply to maintain the regularity of nature, some evidence for which we see in the coherence of different events with each other. We know how insistent our mind is upon finding nature absolutely uniform. It will not repudiate the universal causality of things, even in the face of contradiction. Consequently, it supposes a universe of objects which are in existence and operation whether it perceives their specific causality or not. And this very supposition it also makes, quite independently, from its way of taking in the constancy of their appearances. Identity is naturally ascribed to what appears again and again with similar parts. The disposition to conceive resembling things as one and the same through-

out time is an ultimate propensity of the mind analogous to our determination in causal inference. Thus "identity" reflects mental tendency, as "necessity" itself does. But this identity of things which are only apparent now and again requires the mind to think of a continuity of existence for these things as objects of a world. All this happens so naturally that we *believe*, perforce, in such an external world. But philosophically this belief is uncertain. The philosopher observes the variation of our perceptions with our nervous and organic condition. He suspects, therefore, the independence of our perceptions. Without any reason for his conduct he does not go the length, however, of questioning their continuity of existence. Following the dictates of his human nature he clings both to the dependence and to the external reality of these perceived objects. To emerge from this unsatisfactory position he definitely asserts that there are both objects and perceptions, two different orders of existence, the one permanent, the other a passing show. Then he has trouble getting two such absolutely distinct orders into any intelligible relation with each other, which he must do because we can understand nothing that is devoid of all relationships —we cannot even perceive a thing without giving it some relation or other. So the philosopher relates the objects to the perceptions in terms of causation and resemblance. He imagines that they generate in our minds copies of themselves. So far Hume has followed the argument, describing without comment the phenomenon which takes place in every reflective man. But the upshot of all this is a baffling notion of what seemed, at first, so plain a fact in common life. We conceive an order of reality absolutely different from our perceptions, only to transfer the characters of our perceptual world to that separate, objective universe, making it really nothing more than "a new set of perceptions."[10] After all these operations of mind we get no further than this. We seem to have discovered only

[10] pp. 504, 371; *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 125-6.

"trivial qualities of the fancy." Though we set out to study our imagination as something which works according to *principle*, we end with a grave suspicion of its having no rationale whatsoever. As philosophers we cannot help ourselves in this present doubt. It is only nature that will cure us of it. Here is our consolation, that life will bring the motives of our human nature into play and make us think and believe like other men. And our philosophy itself must take cognisance of this practical solution. We should be modest in our very scepticism. It is the part of wisdom to follow the natural pulses of life and thought and, in all our study, to observe only the actual and historic course of the human mind.

Thus we look back to *Ancient Philosophy*. Long ago men conceived of "substances," and other mysterious entities. They were then actuated by the very impulses we have just now studied. Upon analysis a concrete body is a collection of several distinct, sensible qualities which make their appearance with each other constantly. To us this is one and the same thing, continuing in existence even though the qualities vary greatly from time to time. It seems to be a single, identical object, enduring in time. This is due to the resemblance between the different qualities in the successive appearances of the collection. But we never fail to recognise the real variations in those successive appearances, because we cannot overlook the fact that time is real in such succession—a fact admitted, too, when we describe the qualities as appearing together *constantly*. To reconcile this genuine diversity with the believed identity, we tend to conceive of an "unknown and invisible" thing which really does persist throughout all variations in its appearance, the "substance." Moreover, we imagine this to be a simple uncompounded reality. For the qualities in each appearance of the object coexist. They bear the relations of spatial contiguity and causation to each other. Variations in one quality are correlated with

variations in the others. Consequently, we tend to conceive them as held together by a "something" which is the original principle or nature of the thing. This is, once again, our conception of a substance, which is essentially a simple as well as an identical principle in these manifestations.[11]

As the ancient philosophers thought further about these notions they were moved to introduce other ideas under the same imaginative impulse. The original substance is the same in every body. But bodies fall into various kinds. They exhibit regular differences. It is natural to attribute the specific character, in each case, to a "substantial form." But bodies differ even within their kinds—hence "accidents," individual qualities whose nature it is solely to belong to some substance or other. And, lastly, comes the fiction of "occult qualities" or mysterious powers in nature. All these fancies come very naturally once we have started imagining realities beyond perception.[12]

And what is a philosopher to do in the face of such a reduction to absurdity of the very principles which make his common life intelligible to him? He must escape, at least, from a false philosophy. He must confess that he cannot know necessary connections in nature but that he only *feels* a necessity in the relation of events. He is obliged to affirm his ignorance of "power," as something discernible in objects. Thus he will attain a "true philosophy," standing near the common opinion of mankind. He will not solace himself with words, then, thinking that a mere name dispels ignorance. He will hold to a "moderate scepticism," chary of that fancy which is delightful enough in children and poets who personify nature, but which ill graces a philosopher with his avowed pretensions to a careful and reflective knowledge.

But since Hume has boldly accepted human imagination as the "ultimate judge" in these matters, how will he

[11] p. 507; cf. p. 324.
[12] Cf. above, pp. 134 *f.*

now escape impugning this one constructive principle of his philosophy? "In order to justify myself, I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: and the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular; such as those I have just now taken notice of [those prompting the notions of *philosophical substance* and *accident* and *occult qualities*]. The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life." Hume professes, still, to interpret a fundamental imagination, proper to mankind. He will not spin out systems according to his fancy.

It is a matter of interest, then, to see how *Modern Philosophy* stands, when judged by such a criterion. Its characteristic tenet is that mass, figure, and motion comprise the reality of bodies, while colors, tastes, smells, heat, and cold exist only in the mind. The latter perceptions have no likeness in the objects producing them in the mind. They are dubbed "secondary qualities" on that account. And for such discrimination between the primary and secondary qualities there is this basis, that we find the latter varying and the former, to all appearances, invariably the same. What is acknowledged to be the same extended object, solid, moving, or at rest, now appears with one particular color, and again with another. And different persons will perceive it differently. Thus the primary qualities alone seem real. The secondary depend upon certain peculiar conditions in those who perceive the objects.

There is a very decisive objection to this system of nature. "If colors, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possessed of a real, continued, and independent existence; not even motion,

extension and solidity, which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on." For motion is not presented to us alone, in some sense impression, but as a character of a body. And a body must be disclosed through our impression of "extension" or "solidity." But we have already noticed "that 'tis impossible to conceive extension, but as composed of parts, endowed with color or solidity."[13] Yet color has been excluded *by the theory*, so that solidity alone remains to convey to us the reality of matter. Now the only exact definition of this solidity reduces to that of impenetrability: two bodies impelled by the utmost force conceivable will not be able to penetrate each other. "Solidity, therefore, is perfectly incomprehensible alone, and without the conception of some bodies, which are solid, and maintain this separate and distinct existence." "Now I ask, what idea do we form of these bodies or objects, to which we suppose solidity to belong?" We may think the idea is that of touch. But such feelings are only simple impressions and cannot be the source of our complex idea, the *relation* of solidity, which requires the conception of two bodies contiguous with each other and impelled by some force. Moreover, our touch impressions are like the secondary qualities in that they suffer variation, whilst the solid "object" continues, we believe, invariable. Consequently, there is nothing in the world left to be *real*. When modern philosophy holds to this position, it annihilates matter and the whole external world. It ends in a "most extravagant scepticism."

However, the true philosophy will be only a moderate scepticism. If we cannot understand things except as constituting an external world, we must accept everything as *real* in that world which is necessary to our conception of it. Motion is unintelligible apart from physical bodies moving in space. Such extension is inconceivable without parts whose coexistence makes up the extension. These indivisible and simple parts are nothing at all to us, unless we

[13] Above, pp. 149 *f.* Cf. Newton, *System of the World*, Rule 3, p. 161.

think of them as points or patches of color, and touch. Consequently, the solidity, figure, and motion which we attribute to material bodies have no meaning if we deny genuine reality to the secondary qualities. The objects continuing to exist as one and the same despite their varied appearances in our perception must be really colored and tangible in their nature. Hume thus takes his stand with the naïve mind. Our real world is the world where objects exist as we perceive them and yet with a continuity and independence in their existence which we cannot ascertain by any observation or reasoning. Hume refuses to follow modern philosophy in its separating the "object" from the "perception" and in its distinguishing between primary qualities as specifically "real" and secondary qualities as "mental." He is, indeed, a sceptic, but he holds aloof from a system whose outcome must be so very extreme a denial of the reality of everything whatever.

What then is Hume's own philosophy? Or rather, why is he at all doubtful if he is willing to affirm the reality of the world as the common man perceives it, with color and the secondary qualities as really qualities of objects and with objects themselves no different in nature from the perceptions with which we are acquainted? Well, he is doubtful only as a philosopher, and not as a plain man. The difficulty is that we are thrown into a predicament by our various impulsive beliefs. It is natural to think according to the maxim of cause and effect. It is also part of our nature to be persuaded of the continued and independent existence of objects. Yet if we argue causally, we find ourselves compelled to abandon this belief in the external world. For it is a fact, ascertained by experience, as we prove any other matter of fact, that the objects we know depend upon the peculiarities of our perception of them, and that our perceptions are ever variable. This suggests a compromise. Objects really exist endowed with such qualities as we discover to be invariable, and perceptions

also exist, representing them and containing many other qualities for which there is no corresponding source in the objects. But this is an untenable position. In the first place, it does not fully satisfy our impulse to understand things according to their causal relations. And further, if we test such a doctrine, by applying it to our experience, we find that we cannot even conceive the objects without the more variable qualities of our perception. We must conclude, then, if we would reason strictly from experience, that nothing really exists but our perceptions themselves, and that causes hold only for things in so far as we perceive their connections with each other. Yet our whole nature rises up against this conclusion. We believe in the reality of objects, and in their causality, even when we do not observe them. And adhering to this belief we face another problem for which we see no obvious solution: what are we to make of the proved dependence and variability of these same objects in our different perceptions? Hume brings philosophy to this issue. He confronts, in the end, a problem. He is in hope, however, of arousing discussion, so that a philosophical answer may be found, by others if not by himself. In philosophy, therefore, he must be, at present, a sceptic, for the principles of imagination to which he has had recourse now reveal themselves to be in "a direct and total opposition." And this scepticism ought still to be very modest, for Nature seems oblivious of any such contradiction, and mankind as a creature of nature lives on, believing and acting naïvely upon both these assumptions, that there are causes for all things and that objects, external to us, truly exist.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Self or Personal Identity

We have proceeded to study the belief in an external world without making clear what we mean by our own "person," to whom that order of causes and objects is "external." It has been taken for granted that we know ourselves as beings distinct from the world, and indeed, even from our own perceptions. And this is very natural. For there is no conviction more profoundly felt by the common man than this of a Self enduring through all the changes and events of life. None has been more generally accepted, too, by the philosophers of modern times. It seems to survive all the assaults of doubt, as Descartes showed. It constitutes, therefore, an interesting phenomenon of the human understanding, this belief in a "personal identity."

As Hume opens his study he expresses himself in the manner of a Cartesian. We have found all sorts of difficulties in the conception of a material world, which seems usually so clear and determinate; we should expect still greater problems, then, in regard to the mind itself, since we have no "science" of it, as we do of matter. Yet we are mistaken in this foreboding. "The intellectual world, though involved in infinite obscurities, is not perplexed with any such contradictions, as those we have discovered in the natural. What is known concerning it, agrees with itself; and what is unknown, we must be contented to leave so."[1] This implies a certain ignorance of the ultimate nature of mind, but it also asserts that our belief in human personality is entirely consistent with itself. At first sight, then, Hume seems to have little doubt about the existence of the Self.

But some inquiry must be made. Hume was led to it

[1] *Treatise*, p. 516.

very naturally by the problems with which he had been preoccupied when he caught his vision of the nature of causality. The argument of Berkeley for the existence of God assumed not only that every event must have a cause but also that the causation of "spirit" is immediately witnessed in human consciousness, along with the perceptions. This last assumption had been questioned by Malebranche, who realised the profound mystery in the nature of personality. Other philosophers, great in Hume's eyes, had challenged the Cartesian tradition on that score—Locke and Bishop Butler.[2] The total effect of their criticism was to make Hume dubious of most of what had been written on the *Immateriality of the Soul* and to send him investigating the origin of the common-sense belief in a *Personal Identity*.

The old dispute as to whether the soul were material or not seems to Hume utterly futile, and beside the point. The very notion of an "immaterial substance" is one of those philosophic fictions which raises endless questions. What the ordinary man feels sure of is the persistence of his own person in the events of his world. And, as Butler said, this continuance of "ourselves" within the nature which we know has more significance for religion, particularly for the belief in a future life, than all such metaphysical doctrines about a soul-substance.

One argument alone merits attention, in the older scholastic philosophy, because it discloses a characteristic activity of the human understanding analogous to those which we have already studied. It is this: all material bodies are extended and consist of parts further divisible *ad infinitum*, whereas all perceptions are exactly what we perceive them to be, namely, indivisible and whole; thought and extension thus seem absolutely incompatible with each other as properties of any single subject, so that there

[2] Locke, *Letters to the Bishop of Worcester*, No. 9, dealing with "Immaterial Substance"; Butler, *Dissertation, Of Personal Identity*, appended to *The Analogy of Religion*.

must be a spiritual world distinct from the material world, and consequently, a soul in each of us distinct from the physical body.[3] But such an argument affirms not so much the substantial nature of the soul as its independence of all space. It denies, in general, the "local conjunction" of our perceptions with external matter. And this raises an interesting question—what existences are really susceptible of such union in space?

It is clear that our idea of space itself arises from the perception of things colored and tangible, and that we quite properly *place* color and touch qualities *with* each other, as in the same portion of space. But it is not necessary that tastes, sounds, and other qualities be conjoined with the original qualities, if we are to have the idea of space. Hence spatial position is actually irrelevant to these sense impressions. We do not apprehend them as essentially extended. Indeed we require some experience in order to "place" sounds, as near or remote from ourselves. And if we consider the perception which we call "desire," we appreciate at once the truth of Hume's amazing proposition, "*that an object may exist, and yet be nowhere.*" For "a moral reflection cannot be placed on the right or on the left hand of a passion, nor can a smell or sound be either of a circular or a square figure." Such realities have no true "situation," and they cannot even be imagined to form figures and to bear relations of proximity or distance with respect to any other realities. But the curious fact is, nevertheless, that we do regard some of the qualities, other than color and touch, as having these very relations in space. For example, a fig at one end of a table and an olive at another seem to have *in* them the sweet and the bitter relishes and these different tastes themselves seem to be *located* at a certain *distance* from each other. This is due to that tendency of mind involved in our thought of the identity and continuity of objects: "When objects are united by any

[3] Malebranche, *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, Dialogue One, Vol. I, sec. 1, p. 5.

relation, we have a strong propensity to add some new relation to them, in order to complete the union." Here several qualities appear together as one object, the fig. They coexist. They are always contemporaneous. They sustain, too, the relation of cause and effect, though we may have some difficulty in determining which special quality is invariably prior to any other particular ones in the collection. At any rate they are all undoubtedly contiguous in time. This unity of the qualities we try to make more perfect than the evidence warrants. We "endeavor to give them a new relation, viz., that of a *conjunction in place*," satisfying our mind in its most fundamental tendency to assimilate everything as far as possible. For it here adds a "resemblance of situation to that of qualities" which only appear together in time. We *place* these qualities in our world because we cannot refrain from interpreting our world always in terms of space as well as of time and causation.

Here again a little philosophy soon raises a difficulty for common sense. If smell and taste are spatial by nature, do they exist in the space occupied by the object as a whole, or only in part of it? Is the total smell a summation of minute smells coming from every part of the infinitely divisible extension? We can only defend the position by a logical absurdity: the whole is in the whole, and the whole [is] in every part."[4] But the native "*inclination* of our fancy" determines us, nevertheless, to attribute spatial relation to these things. Thus imagination and reason are at odds here, as in several previous instances. A philosophical solution is not available. Our position ought to be one of moderate scepticism.

This attitude will preserve us from the errors of both the materialists and the spiritualists. The former unite *all* thought with material extension, denying that it can exist

[4] Cf. Clarke-Leibnitz Correspondence, Leibnitz's *Third Letter*, sec. 12, pp. 65-7.

"nowhere," a possibility entirely conceivable, however, when we appreciate the relativity of space. On the other hand, the spiritualists, vindicating the distinction between our perceiving and the objects we perceive extended in space, run straightway to an invisible and immaterial "substance," or soul, in which *all* these perceptions of extended reality inhere. They then face a problem of explaining the peculiar relation between this thinking soul and the matter which it thinks.

Indeed, Hume cannot resist attacking this spiritualism for its obvious futilities. If we grant the existence of a soul and a spiritual order, we find these metaphysicians still talking about the known world of our perception in the same way as the materialists. They use a different name, but they cannot show any specific difference of fact in the universe interpreted according to their views. Instead of making all phenomena variations of some one simple material substance they represent them as modes of a simple immaterial substance—"substance," in both cases, being wholly unintelligible. If we press them with such a charge, they retort that spiritual substance is endowed with the unique power of "action." But action has no meaning except as describing a change in the relations of things to each other, as in apparent motion. And it is equally open to the materialist to argue that action or motion must be attributed to the very nature of matter. There is little to choose between these opposite dogmas. For we know already that action, agency, power, or causation is not a term to be bandied about indiscriminately, and without a very precise definition of its meaning. Both materialists and theologians run into extreme notions about "substance" and "power" which they do not comprehend.

There is, however, one reasonable and important question with regard to our perceptions, that, namely, of their *causation* in the true sense of the term. On this point philosophers have produced a fine theory. Matter and motion are always matter and motion, under all circum-

stances whatsoever, and they never seem to appear as thought: hence perception or thought cannot be caused by matter. This is a purely *a priori* argument. But *a priori*, "any thing may produce any thing," because we never do apprehend the necessity of any such connection in advance of experience, and must always learn what precise things will cause others. We might ask how we know that even motion itself is connected essentially with matter, since the ideas we form of these two realities are entirely distinct from each other. It is only by experience that we come to unite them in our thinking. They are constantly conjoined with each other and so we take them to be necessarily connected. Now we have experience, too, of different motions or positions of parts of matter being constantly conjoined with certain perceptions, as in the case of our passions. Since "every one may perceive, that the different dispositions of his body change his thoughts and sentiments . . . we may certainly conclude, that motion may be, and actually is, the cause of thought and perception."

But our endorsement of materialism to this extent must be carefully qualified. We ought not conclude that *all* perception whatsoever is wholly, or always, caused by physical realities, but only that "matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation." Our scepticism has prevented us from setting up an order of matter absolutely different from the perceptions of our experience and it now cautions us against supposing the material order *as a whole* to be the cause of all our perceptions. We must apply our conception of cause with discrimination, mindful that it is entirely relative to events of our experience.

And Hume remembers, too, that ordinary experience proves human "will" to be as much of a cause itself as matter. The intentions of man are truly effectual in the ordering of his life, and consequently in producing the order of nature. Thus we must take exception to the extreme doctrine of Malebranche who swept causation out of the

world of man and nature and into the Being of God, the only real Cause, Infinite Power. This is an extravagant position. It not only runs counter to our experience and common belief but compels us, also, to regard God alone as accountable for the evil in ourselves and the world. Though offered in support of religion, it shocks our moral sense as well as our intelligence. And we can repudiate it for the more natural view without any loss to ourselves, for "the moral arguments and those derived from the analogy of nature are equally strong and convincing." Hume is thinking of Berkeley and Butler: the order of nature suggests to us the presence of an intelligent Being with a Will and Personality like ourselves. But here, too, we should speculate cautiously, not making all material existence as a whole the mere effect of the causation of this Spirit. A certain degree of scepticism is always salutary.

The old metaphysic goes. But there remains that persistent belief of mankind in *Personal Identity*.[5] No matter how the disputes of speculative thinkers result, this conviction holds its own, and it becomes the plain duty of a philosophy of "human nature" to account for this persuasion and unfold its meaning for our human experience.

Modern philosophy had already taken cognisance of that fundamental belief in the Self. Descartes represented his entire system as the consequence of this inevitable truth which may be struck out in the words, *Cogito ergo Sum*. Malebranche discerned the barrenness of the idea of self, if it is to be identified with the mere fact of consciousness. He pointed out that all thinking or perception is of no import without objects. And our consciousness itself is more like a feeling or awareness accompanying a knowledge of objects than a "knowledge" of self, in the true sense of the word. We achieve no insight into ourselves through the direct inspection of our consciousness. In fact, our problem

[5] Locke, *Essay*, Book II, chap. xxvii; Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, Part III, sec. 1; Berkeley, *Alciphron*, Vol. II, p. 334.

remains that of ancient Platonism, "Know Thyself." Malebranche thus raised a question whether consciousness gives us any *information* about the reality of the Self.

Then Locke was aroused to an examination of this question: "We must consider what person stands for; which, I think, is a thinking, intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive." Thus personal identity reaches no further than consciousness and "whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions, is the same person to whom they both belong. . . . That with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing can join itself, makes the same person, and is one self with it, and with nothing else; and so attributes to itself, and owns all the actions of that thing as its own, as far as that consciousness reaches, and no further; as every one who reflects will perceive. . . . This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness, whereby it becomes concerned and accountable, owns and imputes to itself past actions, just upon the same ground and for the same reason that it does the present."[6] Locke develops the meaning of the "self" out of the French word for consciousness, "conscience." He seems to have realised that the mere being aware *that* we perceive is not sufficient to establish personality and thus he asserts, in addition, the *connecting* of these perceptions at *every moment* as the real basis for our belief. We know what self means from the consciousness of moral responsibility for our deeds.

It remained, however, for Bishop Butler, the professed moralist, to advance the argument beyond this point. For Berkeley, indeed, seems to have taken a much more ab-

[6] *Essay*, Book II, chap. xxvii, secs. 9, 14, 16, 17, 26; cf. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics, Miscellaneous Reflections*, No. 4, chap. i, *Identity*.

stract view of personality than either Locke or Butler. To him the person is immediately perceived in the perceiving, thinking, and willing of things: we know ourselves directly in every such act. We are intuitively aware of the Self every time we perceive anything.[7] But the difficulty is that the Self thus known has very little character. It may be said, of course, to have will and intelligence. But these two processes of mind Berkeley makes no attempt to analyze. They appear to him as ultimates, behind which we cannot go with our philosophical inquiry. On the other hand, Butler was quite prepared to consider these matters in a thoroughly empirical fashion. His *Analogy of Religion* pretends only to show the probability of the truths of religion, arguing by analogy from things familiar to us in the course of Nature. He believes there is a reasonable presumption of the soul's existence beyond its life on earth. He believes this because of the persuasion we all have of the continuity of our personal existence beyond the distinct consciousness of our sensation and memory. This common experience might well justify our thought of immortality. And the belief is not to be explained as being simply our very consciousness itself. We can, indeed, *assure* ourselves of our personal identity at any moment by recalling how we have felt at some previous time. But this conscious reflection upon experience does not *make* our personal identity: "One should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity: any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes."[8] The Self is real to us before we endeavor to ascertain its existence by the evidence of consciousness.

These discussions bring out the idea which Hume has made the theme of all his studies on the understanding. The fundamental truths of life do not arise from any de-

[7] *Dialogues*, Vol. I, p. 449.
[8] *Op. cit.*, par. 3.

liberate or reflective activities of the mind. They are all believed before we are able to make certain of them by reason. This holds for the reality of space, time, causation, and objective existence—and it holds, too, for the existence of the Person or Self. At every moment we suppose our personality to exist beyond that moment of consciousness. It was this truth which Malebranche had declared, by implication, when he argued that though we possess little real knowledge of the nature of "spirit" through consciousness, we find it always present, opposed to matter and awaiting still to be revealed in its inexhaustible reality. And Locke, when he described the self from our experience of moral accountability, indicated how we come to our native belief. Somehow the self *owns* all the actions of the past and present. This is but an example of Hume's general conception of our primary beliefs: we *find* our different perceptions already brought into some *unity and connection* with each other. Our belief, then, in a personality which continues to exist during all our perceptions and even beyond their period of duration is a product of "association." It is the imagination alone which gives such relation to our feelings and ideas. Without supposing this factor we should be utterly unable "to give a reason why we can thus extend our identity beyond our memory" as well as our senses.[9]

We must first realise, however, that we have no direct information about the mind as an existence distinct from our perceptions and continuing in its being whilst they vary and pass. For some philosophers had averred an immediate consciousness or intuition of their own persons. Nothing seemed to them more certain than this perfect identity and simplicity of the Self. It was not reached by any process of reasoning or imagination, because it presented itself to the mind as a distinctive reality which mankind must universally acknowledge. Now we always

[9] *Treatise*, Vol. I, p. 543.

regard ourselves as existing every moment of our lives. It follows that this supposedly distinct *impression* of the Self must be an *invariable* one, appearing always the same at all times, no matter what else may be occupying our mind. To verify such a theory, therefore, we need only study our perceptions at any moment. Do we discover some impression unchanging throughout all the diversity of things with which we are acquainted in these perceptions? This is simply a question of fact.

"For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. . . . If any one, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continued which he calls *himself;* though I am certain there is no such principle in me. But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. . . . The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. . . . The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is composed."[10]

The only distinct existences are the particular objects

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 534 *f.*

of our perception. We never observe, as an object itself, this mind or personality to which we think these perceptions belong. The identity of a person is exactly in the same pass with time, space, universals, necessary connection, and the external world. Our ideas of these realities have no simple and original impressions with which they may be identified, or to which they may be traced. They represent our ways of understanding the particular things which make themselves known to us through sensation and feeling. And thus our thought of a Self invariably existing, one and the same throughout all the changes in our perceptions, a unity and identity standing out from these definite impressions and ideas—this conception is intelligible only by tracing its origin to a "natural propension" of the human mind that is brought into play by certain features of the order of perceptions.

This natural impulse of the imagination is one with which we are quite familiar, since it has already been discovered in the production of our belief in the external world. We tend to think time real even when an unchanging object is perceived. The coexistence of this single object with other objects in space which do change and thus give rise to the true idea of time, moves us to see even it as enduring throughout a lapse of time. This object takes on the aspect we call "identity." But a very similar operation takes place when we have truly changing objects, objects in a real succession, whose different appearances resemble each other so closely that we impulsively connect them and treat them as *one thing*. This imagined unity of what appear as diverse objects is almost indistinguishable from the unity of a truly single object in an imaginary time. As a result, we think the two different kinds of things to be identical. In the case of our belief in an external world the idea of the identity of objects which appear constantly in the same order cannot wholly maintain itself against the obvious appearances of real difference. We "save" the

identity, then, by thinking that the *continuity* and *independence* are in the "objects" alone and that the breaks and variations are proper to our "perceptions" of these objects from time to time. This defines for us the meaning of the external world. And we find corroboration for our belief, thus formed, in the separate aspect of the "coherence" of our perceptions, which suggests a continued presence and operation of "objects" even when we do not actually witness their causality.

But there are other cases where the identity seems more perfect than that which we have simply in objects. The more closely related we take things to be the stronger is our view of their essential unity. For any such natural "relation" means that we pass in thought from one to the other so insensibly and gradually, that we are quite unaware of any distinction between them, and thus conceive them as one and the same identical thing. Now a circumstance which always prompts us to attribute a high degree of unity to different things is the fact that they combine to effect some "common end." Thus a ship may remain the *same* ship for a very great length of time, though every nail and board of its structure has been replaced during that period, because all the parts have a common reference to each other in its function. But this kind of identity is eclipsed by another, even more distinctive. We observe not merely a co-operation of all the parts but a "sympathy" between them, the action of every one reacting upon all. "This is the case with all animals and vegetables; where not only the several parts have a reference to some general purpose, but also a mutual dependence on, and connection with each other." The living organism has an identity marked by this purposiveness. And thus the world of animate nature becomes distinct for us as an order of reality not to be confused with the merely external or inanimate world of objects.

We distinguish mind, too, from living nature, as well as from sheer matter, and we exalt the identity of the per-

son as the most perfect with which we have any acquaintance. Yet we must proceed by the same method of reasoning "which has so successfully explained the identity of plants, and animals, and ships, and houses, and of all the compounded and changeable productions either of art or nature." What forms of association are involved, then, in this idea of the Self?

It is obvious that "contiguity" in time and place is without much bearing upon our idea of the Self. This principle may give us the unity of space and time. But it never seems to induce us to think of ourselves as perfectly individual beings, continuing in time and present at every perception. We can realise such orders of coexistence and succession in our perceptions without feeling impelled to imagine our own persons confronting them and enduring throughout that space and time. Indeed, it is precisely because we have not been able to identify what we believe to be "ourselves" in the description which Hume has already given of the mind, as *a mere collection of successive perceptions*, that we now make this further inquiry into the sources of our belief.

The principle of resemblance seems more clearly involved in our conception of the Self. We see this in the fact of memory. When we remember something which is past, we know that this representation is *like* the perception we then had. Were it not for this joining of our perceptions with each other by virtue of their resemblances, we should not enjoy a "past" in our life at all. In a sense, then, memory underlies all imaginative relation, not only that of time but also causation itself.[11] Yet this is not memory in the deliberate form of a *seeking* to recall. It is entirely unreflective and is the condition of every assimilation made impulsively by the mind. It joins with the present perception, so that we have what Locke rightly termed a "consciousness." In this respect Locke was justified in affirming that "consciousness makes personal identity."

[11] p. 541.

Without such memory united with our immediate impressions there would not be that fundamental resemblance between our different perceptions at different times which enables us to "own" them and place them in the orders of time and external reality,—external to "ourselves."

But the most important of all the relations for the conception of our personal existence is causation. "We may observe, that the true idea of the human mind,[12] is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. Our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. One thought chases another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expelled in its turn. In this respect, I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation. And in this view our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate that with regard to the imagination, by the making our distant per-

[12] Notwithstanding Hume's definite statement here, writers have almost always quoted the "mere bundle or collection of successive perceptions" as his own view. That earlier description tells us only what we can *observe*, if we think that we can look upon mind directly, as an *object* of perception. But Hume *disagrees* with the "metaphysicians" in their pretension, and he states that what they actually discover is *not* what they believe. He is now offering what he considers the true portrayal of the mind so that we can understand how we do come to believe in the identity of our own persons.

ceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures."

It is, therefore, the perfectly reciprocal causation which moves us to believe in our own identity. This is something more than the co-operation and sympathy characteristic of living bodies. For the parts of an organism, though they influence each other mutually, cannot change their essential functions in the life of the whole without destruction of the body. But our perceptions play different parts throughout life,—sometimes one is predominant, sometimes another,—and they engender still other perceptions which take their place in the scheme of things. Indeed, even the dispositions or habits of the mind may change without loss of unity and continuity. Here is something witnessed nowhere else in animate nature. The only thing like it in all our experience is the phenomenon of social life in a political community. There is an "association" of members determined by an invisible common interest. And it is this extensive and complete association of our impressions and ideas, in the life of emotion as well as in the understanding, which induces us to conceive that we are a Self, an existence distinct from our perceptions, and prior to them, even to our furthest memories, and continuing, beyond anything we can definitely anticipate, into the unknown future.

This, then, is the nature of the Self. It is a reality known to us only by virtue of the general fact of association. It is a unity and a permanent existence which we cannot refrain from conceiving because of the remarkably perfect causal relations throughout the life of mind. This belief is contradicted by nothing in experience. The conception does not come into conflict with any other impulsive belief. So far, then, it is warranted. But when philosophers apply themselves to it, they can raise many "nice and subtle" points. When does this identity of the person come to be, and when does it go? The philosophers can decide

nothing on this score. Nor are they wiser than the rest of us about the "simple" nature of the soul. Hume makes it his business only to set forth the origin and meaning of personal identity for the human understanding, and he is very ready to confess an ignorance about these matters touching the existence of a soul.

CHAPTER NINE

The Maturing of a Philosophical Scepticism

At the end of his study of the understanding Hume paused and gave expression to his own fears and hopes over this new venture in philosophy. He compared himself to an explorer who had set out boldly to encompass the whole world of mind. He had struck on many shallows, and once barely escaped shipwreck, as he tried to round that difficult point of causal reasoning. Having learned that he could not count upon "reason," he had trusted to the genius of human imagination. But he was conscious of its defects, and of the uncertainty of amending them, and as he travelled the charted seas of the intellectual world he saw, now and again, the warning wreckage of other pretentious philosophies. These things made him feel very keenly how precarious were his own discoveries in the realm of thought. There stole over him, too, a desperate fear and loneliness, for he fancied that he would be discredited by the conjoint "enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians."

This new philosophy begins with a scrutiny of the common beliefs of mankind. The characteristic mark of any belief is simply feeling, "a *strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly*," in the particular aspect which they happen to have for us. By examination of a typical instance, our belief in any matter of fact, Hume has learned to distinguish the factors which bring about this remarkable attitude of the mind. Experience gives us information about the particular conjunctions of things in the past; a habit of mind impels us to expect the same junctures for the future. Whenever experience affords the opportunity, this native determination of the mind makes us infer, and believe in, the existence of some new fact. This operation takes place through the imagination. Hence the strong im-

pulse of belief is really a property of the imagination. Without it "we could never assent to any argument, nor carry our view beyond those few objects, which are present to our senses. Nay, even to these objects we could never attribute any existence, but what was dependent on the senses; and must comprehend them entirely in that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person. Nay farther, even with relation [with regard] to that succession, we could only admit of those perceptions, which are immediately present to our consciousness, nor could those lively images, with which the memory presents us, be ever received as true pictures of past perceptions. The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas."

This imaginative quality seems to come when it lists. It is instinctive. It makes us believe in the reality of causes, and it impels us to think of an external universe of objects. Both beliefs are equally natural, and inevitable, and yet, upon reflection, we become aware of a conflict between them. The fundamental tendency to infer causes and effects, in conformity with our experience, proves to us that objects must depend upon our perception, because they change in their appearance with every difference in our manner of perceiving them. On the other hand, our propensity to conceive of external objects carries with it the view that these objects exist in reality just as we perceive them, and that they continue to do so, even though our perceptions take place at different times and under varied conditions. Our belief here implies an independence of the objects, whereas we have causal proof of their actual dependence upon our perception. Here is a signal contradiction within our imaginative human nature.

Philosophy has been baffled by this problem. We may distinguish between the permanent *objects*, endowed with the unvarying "primary qualities," and our *perceptions* of them, in which we have certain additional, or "secon-

dary" qualities. But a little study shows us that not even primary qualities are apparent to us without color and touch. If these secondary qualities are not real, then, the primary are likewise unreal, for we cannot suppose them to exist unperceived. Or, if we conceive them to have such an existence, apart from our perception, we cannot describe them intelligibly, for we only understand things by relating them with what we perceive through our senses or memory. Indeed, the philosophers who pretend to know absolutely distinct objects invest those abstract entities with the very character of a new set of perceptions, supposing that they *resemble* and produce, or *cause*, our familiar perceptions—thinking of them, in other words, in relationships proper only to the things of our experience. Thus, instead of throwing light upon our common notions of the world, the metaphysicians merely add to our confusion, with their fancies and subtle, verbal distinctions.

We could tolerate these inconsistencies of the imagination, were we possessed of an insight, at some point, into the "principle" of our thought. The most general and important form of connection among different objects or perceptions is that of cause and effect. Could we know the cause, the tie, the energy, which unites anything with anything else whatsoever, we should have some foundation whence we might construct a set of true beliefs about existence. Our world would appear to be a genuine system of reality. The conclusions of causal inference could not then stand opposed to our opinions about the objective order. But nowhere among objects of perception do we find a distinct bond of causality.The necessity of such a connection is nothing but that determination of the mind, or strong impulse of imagination. In short, we cannot find any ultimate rationale of our human understanding.

Our intellectual blindness is largely concealed from us in daily life. We realise it only when we apply our supposed principle of cause and effect to cases which are "most unusual and extraordinary." Hume may still be thinking,

here, of the futile arguments of modern philosophy to ascertain the existence of an external world of objects. But his thought seems, rather, to have gone back to his own earliest problem, the religious inference of a Cause for the Order of Nature: how, in examining why we must conceive of the Being of God distinct from the whole world, we discover that we do not actually know why a cause is necessary in *any* case. Ordinarily, we seem to learn something important, and to understand a situation better, when we refer to its cause or effect; in this special case we may embolden ourselves to ask, *Cui bono?* Nature remains the same, in her order and processes, whether we conceive this Being or not. Could we have a veritable intelligence of active power and causation in some quarter, we might be warranted in pretending to an increase of knowledge through these conceptions of Divine Power. But "nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers. Men of bright fancies may in this respect be compared to those angels, whom the scripture represents as covering their eyes with their wings."

Having no other recourse, however, than imagination, we might still hope to attain a true knowledge of existence by subjecting its rash impulses to some control. The sheer impelling quality of an idea as it occurs to us is surely a very "trivial" property by which to guide ourselves in our search for truth. A rule of method, even if it were only generalised from our experience of the apparently successful enterprises of thought, would make, at least, for a stable body of belief. We should thus govern ourselves by "the general and more established properties of the imagination," which is the same thing as our "understanding," in the strict sense of the term. What logic, then, does our own "experimental" study of *Knowledge and Probability* suggest?

Whenever we accept anything from sense perception or

memory as evidence for a belief in some different thing, we *ought* first to examine our original "fact," to ascertain whether it is truly a matter of fact, for nothing is certain in its own right, but always by reference to something which is at once distinct from itself and yet related to it in our experience. To make certain, however, of the actual existence of that initial fact, related as we conceive it, we must justify the inference which once established *that* relation for us. This requires us to test even the prior inference, before we can ever assent to our present conclusion. And to assay that previous judgment we should need, once again, to go through the whole round of determining the fact with which we then started, by scrutinising its experienced connection with still more remote facts. And this regress is indefinite, and inevitable, because experience by itself determines nothing as certain. The "determination" seems to proceed always from our own mind. But that is simply an impulse, and so our deliberate effort to regulate it, by such labored processes of reasoning, is bound to dissipate its force, and leave us eventually in a "total scepticism."[1]

Usually we save ourselves from this scepticism by not trying to be methodical in our thinking. Whatever appeals to us as relevant to our situation we believe, simply from the impelling quality of that thought. But, as philosophers, we cannot make this careless practice the rule for our thinking and research. This would eliminate "all science and philosophy." And it would not be justified, for it means that we eschew all thought that is prosecuted with a strict regard for logic just because of the arguments in this elaborate philosophy. Thus we cannot escape some philosophy, or reflective thought. But we seem tossed between a false one and none at all. "For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case."

Yet Hume must believe, for the moment at least, in his own careful studies on the human understanding. He feels

[1] *Treatise*, pp. 547-8; cf. pp. 472-4.

obliged, as a philosopher, to reject all belief and reasoning, because of the apparent contradictions and the defects of our imagination. No opinion seems more probable than any other. He does not know what manner of being he really is, nor the true causes of his being, nor his own ultimate destiny. He is in the dark about other persons and his mutual relations with them. If any superior powers influence his life, he cannot determine what they are, in their veritable nature. On all these matters he desires some consoling assurance. But he feels himself to be in the uttermost confusion and helplessness of mind. He knows enough to ask these questions, but not to answer them.

It is nature that cures the hopeless doubt. "I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther. Here then I find myself absolutely and necessarily determined to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life. . . . I may, nay I must yield to the current of nature, in submitting to my senses and understanding; and in this blind submission I show most perfectly my sceptical disposition and principles."

But nature brings something more than the relief of play and companionship. The spirit of intellectual inquiry renews itself, despite all previous discovery of insurmountable difficulty. "I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me. I am uneasy to think I approve of one subject, and disapprove of another; call one thing beautiful, and another deformed; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing upon what principles I proceed. I am concerned for the condition of the learned world, which lies under such a deplorable ignorance in all

these particulars. I feel an ambition to arise in me of contributing to the instruction of mankind, and of acquiring a name by my inventions and discoveries."

With such ambition a natural impulse of self-preservation concurs. There must be some genuine philosophy in place of the "indolent belief" of the common man, for superstition is very active, and makes bold, with its high-flown systems and hypotheses, to subvert the mind. Philosophy will be able to moderate, and correct these misleading thoughts.

In the end, Hume takes courage. "We might hope to establish a system or set of opinions, which, if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hoped for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination. . . . For my part, my only hope is, that I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction. Human nature is the only science of man; and yet has been hitherto the most neglected. 'Twill be sufficient for me, if I can bring it a little more into fashion; and the hope of this serves to compose my temper from that spleen, and invigorate it from that indolence, which sometimes prevail upon me. . . . A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction."

Hume proceeded, then, in accordance with his original plan, to study the "passions" and morals and society. Without the least qualm about employing the dubious principles of our human understanding, he inquired into causes and effects, and offered his results as a contribution to the "science" of mankind. The obscure nature of personality was no hindrance, now, to an empirical analysis of the various sentiments as having for their "object"

either our own "self" or some other "person." Even human character took on the form of a "personal" merit. He talked about "causes" and "objects" and "persons," therefore, as if they were all plain matters of experience.

The theme of the *Passions* is the same as that of the book on the *Understanding*. Our life is actuated by emotions and sentiments, as well as by the beliefs of our judgment, and the chief of these are very complicated sentiments, not the simple impulses of liking and dislike, or desire and aversion. They are passions which some pleasing or unpleasing thing excites, only to carry our attention, forthwith, to ourselves, or to somebody else, as the object about which we feel a pronounced satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Their complexity is exactly like that of the complex ideas. It involves a connection of impressions and ideas *naturally* made by the mind, for there is nothing deliberate about our loves and hates, and our sentiments of pride and humiliation. Indeed, even the somewhat unusual pursuit of abstract truth is not an affair of conscious choice: it is something to which we are impelled by our very nature. These are all phenomena, then, of an impulsive imagination. And they exhibit its typical "principles" of association. Thus the study of the *Passions* strengthens us in the opinion, about which we had come to feel dubious, as we were concluding the previous investigation, that there is a genuine "system" of all the activities of mind.

The general idea of the *Treatise* persisted in Hume's study of politics and morality. Though the third book was, in some measure, independent of the two previous ones, it corroborated their meaning. Hume was intent everywhere upon showing that a regular imagination, and not "reason," was the foundation of whatever is characteristic and important in the life of man.

At first sight, however, this conception hardly seems to be relevant to these phases of our existence. The imaginative activity producing our beliefs and our complex pas-

sions has been portrayed as unwitting, or unconscious: the association of ideas and impressions is a secret process going on behind the scenes of that figurative theater, the mind, and it can be discovered only by making an "anatomy" of our experience. But moral conduct presupposes that we have clearly in mind what we are about—if it involves any complex union of sentiments and ideas, we must surely be aware of the fact as we proceed to make our judgment of moral value, or perform our deed. This seems to remove those judgments from the sphere of the instinctive imagination. Furthermore, the type of morality most interesting to Hume is "justice." But justice has meaning only with reference to a whole scheme of life in society, which seems to imply the agency of intelligence or reflection, as declared by the traditional doctrine of a "social contract." It seems evident, too, that the maintenance of justice demands more than sheer impulses of imagination, however elaborate and genial they may be, since mankind has found it necessary to set up deliberative bodies for making law, and to rely further upon the discretion and sagacity of governors and judges for its application to the detailed exigencies of civic life. Indeed, Hume himself started out by designating justice an "artificial virtue," because it depends upon all such artifice, that is, upon the work of conscious intelligence.[2] It seems, then, as if the judgments of morality are not really analogous to our sentiments and our impulsive "natural judgments" of belief.

Hume realised, even while writing his book, the error of making a distinction between the artificial and the natural virtues. At first he had supposed that our judgment of approval upon such personal merits as kindness, benevolence, and the human qualities in general is a direct pronouncement of "conscience, or a sense of morals." This shows his discipleship to Hutcheson. But his own independent studies in politics and society drew his attention, primarily, to that form of human excellence which we call

[2] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 257-8.

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"justice." He found it necessary to examine this virtue to the bottom, before he could understand anything about the nature of human morality. He noticed, too, the variety of "morals" that exist because man is a being who spends his life in society,—honesty in dealings, fidelity to promises, allegiance to the State, chastity, and special forms of honor in gentlemen and in political rulers. And then he recognised that the virtues which he first took to be so natural and simple are themselves dependent upon that same civic life, and take their particular color from it. There is not much value, therefore, in stressing the artificial character of certain of our moral principles, since all personal merit is as complicated in its origin as honor and justice.[3]

This seems to make all morality "artificial." But Hume has a new interpretation of the complexity of the factors which make society itself possible and give rise to our judgments of merit or demerit in persons. The origin of social life is no "artifice." There has never been, in actual history, a convention of men deliberately uniting themselves to form a nation and a state. We can find no evidence of a condition of human existence where people are not already associated with one another. From the tendencies we now observe, however, we can surmise that men first lived in the family and then extended their intercourse until they became a nation, after which they had such numerous dealings with each other outside their own people that their states had to enter into mutual relations of war and peace. Yet no part of this process has been a matter of conscious choice. The change has come about so gradually and slowly, taking very long periods of time, that no individuals can have had prescience of the advantages and the meaning of the institutions by which they

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 265, 305, 310. Hume ignored the distinction entirely in the *Enquiry*. It is significant that in the interim he had taken up the study of Greek again, refreshing himself, doubtless, at that fountain-head of ancient learning, the *Ethics* of Aristotle. He spoke of Aristotle with respect, in the first *Enquiry*, and he referred often to the *Ethics*, in the second one.

found themselves living and progressing.[4] Thus the theory of a "social contract" is misleading. It conveys a false impression of history. And it suggests that reason has played an important rôle in the creating of society and government. The real factor cannot be reason, however, in any pretentious sense of the term. It seems to be a capacity of sympathy, an imaginative appreciation of the public interest, wherever men are thrown together in the affairs of life. Society and morals have their roots, therefore, in something within our human nature which operates before we can reflect and deliberately plan what to do.

Nor is the moral judgment itself an act of reason. For the operations of our understanding have to do only with the determination of abstract truth or fact. Reason cannot distinguish between the good and the bad, or the right and the wrong. It is unable to assign worth to anything real. It merely gives us information of the existence of this or that particular thing;—when we have established such and such a fact about a person, or his deed, we may then come to feel a sense of approval or disapproval regarding it, which is the distinctively moral judgment. The judgment is thus an expression of natural sentiment rather than of intellect.[5]

The best example of the basis of morality in sentiment, and of the subordinate function of deliberate reasoning, is the case of justice. Every act of which we approve as "just" is one which tends to the public interest. It is useful as a type of action for the preservation and welfare of society. There are many such utilities, according to the vital needs of the different forms of human association,—a justice for the family, one for the state, and one even for the intercourse of states and nationalities. The specific regulations vary with the requirements of each case. And the authority of those laws is stronger in some instances

[4] *Treatise*, pp. 263, 274-82, and footnotes, 317, 319; *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 115, 125-6, 185, 382, 452, 480.
[5] *Treatise*, Part I, secs. 1-2; *Enquiry*, Appendix I.

than in others, as we may see in the greater force of our personal obligation to the family and the state than that of statesmen to the society of nations. The determining factor is the degree of utility, under the circumstances, of the qualities of character and conduct which are esteemed, or enjoined. Now it is true that much human thought is expended in the attempt to discern what is thus necessary or useful. We maintain legislative bodies, courts of law, and many administrative officers in order to ascertain what is really for the public good. But what is it that makes us consider actions with respect to their utility? There are many relations in which we can view human character and conduct: this special reference to the well-being or unhappiness of mankind points to our having some prior interest in such human satisfaction, a distinct *concern* for other persons besides ourselves. This "sympathy" inspires our approval or disapproval, as the case may be. It is thus the foundation of all our decisions concerning right and wrong.[6]

Wherever we become acquainted, through sympathy, with the usefulness of some personal quality, we feel with regard to it the peculiar sentiment of morality. But the views expressed in these sentiments are not conceived to be purely individual judgments. We think of them as standards, which others of our community accept. Here, too, we might suppose that reason plays a part, in the forming of general principles from the various particular cases of utility. Yet it is merely by ordinary intercourse and conversation that we come to adopt these rules of conduct. The factor of chief importance in bringing about this agreement as to what men approve or disapprove in each other is, once more, human sympathy. Thus the morals of a generation are not unalterable "principles" laid down by reason but simply generalised conceptions of value

[6] *Treatise*, pp. 271, 299, 310, 335 *ff.*, 349 *f.*; *Enquiry*, Sec. v, part 2, and Conclusion.

brought into existence by the agency of the human imagination.[7]

In this manner Hume worked out the original theme of the *Treatise*. Morals are like the "customs" of the understanding that determine our thinking and action. They have their basis in imagination, which first makes society itself possible, and then the appreciation of human merit in all the circumstances of life, and finally the extension of these judgments of worth throughout the community. They are judgments of natural sentiment and as such are capable, at times, of influencing our conduct, like beliefs and passions. Indeed these moral sentiments may be so strong as to counteract the impulses of passion, because they originate in our sympathy, which is a more extensive and constant factor than any single impulse of sentiment.[8] To describe this interplay of passion and sentiment, or feeling and "reason," as it is usually called, was beyond the purpose of Hume's book.[9] That must be left to other writers. For his part, it was enough to propose a "system" of the nature of man, in regard to our common-sense beliefs, our ruling passions, and our moral sentiments.

At some time during the writing of the last book of the *Treatise* Hume began to suspect his original account of the idea of "personal identity." He felt it necessary to tell us so, in an Appendix to that book. Just what aroused in him this suspicion of a failure to explain "mind" itself, we can only surmise. He was much occupied, in both the later books, with the subject of personality. The dominating passions centred about persons. Morality and society were meaningless apart from persons. And not only that, but the all-pervasive factor of sympathy was unintelligible without self-consciousness. Thus he had been lured into

[7] *Treatise*, pp. 271, 315, 333, 341 *f.*, 359; *Enquiry*, Conclusion.
[8] *Treatise*, pp. 260, 338, 349.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

some bold speculations about the ultimate source of sympathy, deriving it from a native concern for self which is always operative in mankind. This may have induced him to reflect upon his earlier treatment of the self, and thus to discover some new reasons for a scepticism in philosophy.

The interesting fact about sympathy is that it produces an association of man with man in society, and establishes common ways of living and morals.[10] It seems to show outwardly what the mind is always doing in secret,—that is, bringing things into a unity and relation with each other. Just as it connects ideas and impressions, unknown to ourselves who only *find* the relations after the fact, so it obviously brings the thoughts and feelings and activities of different persons into unison, before they ever understand the grounds of their community with each other. Is there not here some inner mechanism, analogous to that which we have found in the human understanding?

Indeed, sympathy constitutes a greater challenge to us, in our study of man, than even belief itself.[11] It is an impulsive and unreflective sharing of the life of other persons, a sharing of their opinions, sentiments, and tendencies to action. We are induced, by the marks of feeling in those whom we see about us, to feel the veritable sentiment that they feel in themselves, and to act on it as if it had arisen spontaneously within our own hearts. In short, we have the very same, or the corresponding "impression" which animates the other person in our presence. Now belief never attains quite that force and influence. At best it only approximates an impression, in such impulsive quality. It always remains an "idea" strongly felt. How, then, can we explain the production of an original sentiment in one person from his simple observation of its usual

[10] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 141, 150, 349 *f.*; cf. Malebranche, *Recherche*, Book II, Part III, *De la Communication Contagieuse des Imaginations Fortes;* Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, Book VIII, 1155a (Everyman ed., p. 182); Book IX, 1169b (p. 227); 1170b (p. 229); Cicero, *De Officiis*, Book I, chap. XLIII, 153 (Loeb Classics, p. 157). See above, p. 101.

[11] *Treatise*, pp. 111, 114, 335 *f.*, 346 *f.*

expression in some one else? This is an alluring problem for one who has been showing how ideas will become "beliefs," through the supposition of a peculiar quality or inward determination of the human mind.

Earlier writers, ancient and modern, had observed that sympathy arises whenever persons are somewhat alike. Obviously, all human beings resemble each other in essential respects, and especially in their passions, and native tendencies of thought and action. But in proportion as some particular persons show any marked similarity of mind, we notice that they are more in sympathy with each other than with others who differ from them in such regard. Any familiar or natural relation will also tend to bring about this uniformity of sentiment and conduct. Neighborhood does so, and blood relationship. And Hume sees in these varied circumstances the three principles of mental association, for neighborhood is the relation of contiguity of time and place, and blood relationship is that of causation.[12]

But all these relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation would not make the mere idea of some impulse or feeling become the very feeling and activity itself. They might, indeed, produce a strong conviction in us of the reality of this tendency in the other person. We should certainly take it to be the fact, when we observe his expressions, that he actually feels this or that emotion. Yet what happens is not simply a belief, but our own feeling of this particular sentiment. This must be due to a hidden factor that has not yet come into view.

"'Tis evident, that the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it. Whatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like

12 *Treatise*, p. 112; cf. Aristotle, *op. cit.*, 1156b-1157a (p. 187), 1159b (p. 196); Butler, in Selby-Bigge, *op. cit.*, sec. 207.

vivacity of conception, according to the foregoing principles."[13] If anything is naturally thought in connection with ourselves, it is going to be felt with an impulsive quality which must exceed that of any belief whatsoever, because of its relation to something that is of greater interest to us than any other reality.

"An idea, or rather impression of ourselves!" Has not this been excluded, once and for all, by the previous study of personal identity? We never can distinguish "ourselves" from the many perceptions which make up our mind. But Hume has not forgotten this, and he reasserts it: "Ourself, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing: for which reason we must turn our view to external objects; and 'tis natural for us to consider with most attention such as lie contiguous to us, or resemble us."[14] Thus our impression of ourselves is not to be identified with any *object* of perception. It is not present *to* us, as Hume is careful to state, but *with* us,—whence the appropriateness of our phrase "consciousness of self," which implies that we know the existence of our own self only along with our perceptions, and that we can know nothing of it without them. Hence the impression of ourselves is one of those very elusive aspects of reality, an "impression of reflection," like the true necessity of cause and effect, that inner determination of the mind. Hume had spoken of it, in the first book of the *Treatise*, as "the concern we take in ourselves."[15] We feel it, intimately and constantly, but we cannot find it in any distinctive and simple perception.

A "concern" is not merely a feeling, however, but an activity or impulse. Like the determination of the mind in all belief, it is a factor which makes us "turn our view" to such things as we find naturally available. It directs our "attention" upon what is constantly related to us, and

[13] *Treatise*, p. 112.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 131.
[15] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 535.

contiguous to us, and resembling ourselves. It constitutes, at all times, a distinct *motif* of the mind.

How this native concern for ourselves is conceived to operate we may see in the following descriptions. "Ourself is intimately present to us, and whatever is related to self must partake of that quality." Thus what is near or contiguous to us is more interesting and present than the remote. And time and place are not equal in this respect. We take in two contiguous places, with reference to ourselves, much more readily than two successive parts of time, because the things *coexisting* with ourselves are present *with* us, as the language suggests, whereas things succeeding each other need to be *re-presented* to us at every moment. Further, with regard to time itself, the past and future are not of equal importance to our thought,—likewise on account of our ever-present consciousness of self. The future is imagined more naturally than the past. "We always follow the succession of time in placing our ideas, and from the consideration of any object pass more easily to that, which follows immediately after it, than to that which went before it. . . . The present situation of the person is always that of the imagination, and . . . 'tis from thence we proceed to the conception of any distant object. When the object is past, the progression of the thought in passing to it from the present is contrary to nature. . . . On the other hand, when we turn our thought to a future object, our fancy flows along the stream of time, and arrives at the object by an order, which seems most natural, passing always from one point of time to that which is immediately posterior to it. . . . We advance, rather than retard our existence. . . . By which means we conceive the future as flowing every moment nearer us, and the past as retiring."[16] Thus we ourselves constitute an imaginary centre, whence a concern spreads itself upon whatsoever appears before our mind, the things immediately next ourselves being most

[16] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 205 *ff.*

interesting, particularly those coexisting with us in space, while among those that exist in time, the future is more vital than the past.

The effect of self-consciousness is thus to impart a greater degree of interest to any object naturally conceived by the mind. When we pass in thought, under the influence of experience, from any present impression to a remote object, we feel the idea of that object with a force almost equal to that of an impression of the senses—and this is "belief." But when we make any transition of thought under the impulse of that concern for self, we actually feel the force of a direct impression, because that initial consciousness of ourselves is an impression of greater vitality than any other single sensation or feeling. In short, any object of our attention in self-consciousness must be regarded with "passion," a sentiment stronger than belief.[17]

We are now prepared to understand the phenomenon of sympathy, in view of this active self-consciousness. The object of our attention is some other person giving expression to some movement of mind. Now "every human creature resembles ourselves, [particularly in respect to the affections and impulses[18]] and by that means has an advantage above any other object, in operating on the imagination." That is why "company is naturally so rejoicing, as presenting the liveliest of all objects, *viz.*, a rational and thinking being like ourselves, who communicates to us all the actions of his mind; makes us privy to his inmost sentiments and affections; and lets us see, in the very instant of their production, all the emotions, which are caused by any object."[19] Thus we, who are always concerned in ourselves, cannot see the overt tendencies of another's mind without being moved in precisely those ways. We are made conscious of ourselves by the perception of

[17] Hume used the description of the preceding paragraph to explain the "passion" of admiration, which had seemed such an anomaly to philosophers since the time of Descartes. *Treatise*, pp. 209 *ff.*

[18] Cf. pp. 112-3, 335.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 146.

those impulses and attitudes.[20] Though we cannot observe what our self is, as an object of perception, we do know it as something real through such intercourse with others, who define it for us by their own living presence. Thus "the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees."[21] Sympathy is, then, a phase of our own self-consciousness.

The effect of this particular operation of our innate concern for self is analogous to that we have already noticed. Any object conceived under such an impulse is passionately felt. In this case the object is a human creature, an object evoking a more complete consciousness than any inanimate thing. The result is a greater degree of feeling about human beings than about any other objects of our world. Something of our native concern for ourselves passes into our consideration of the other person. We have, in short, a concern for others, a "humanity." This shows itself in many ways, notably in such active feelings as pity and compassion.

But active sympathy is the foundation of human society and customs, and it thus creates a situation where we enjoy manifold opportunities for the sympathetic relation. Thus we develop an "extensive sympathy" with certain persons. We are interested not merely in some present, affecting moment, but in their personal *life* as a whole, comprising the future with all its possibilities of happiness and unhappiness. Hence arise our complex sentiments of love or hate.[22] These are excited whenever something agreeable or disagreeable is naturally thought of with regard to a person in whom we already take a vital interest. They are very moving "passions" in human affairs.

[20] *Treatise*, Vol. II, pp. 113, 159, 166.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 169 *ff.*

But we have not noticed the most powerful of all our sentiments, the type with which Hume opens his entire treatment of the "passions," and for which he first introduces his notion of self-consciousness. These are the sentiments we feel *about* the self "of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness."[23] Our concern sends the thought forward; the imagination advances according to the principles of contiguity, resemblance, and causation. Anything entering thus naturally into the mind will define "ourselves" for us at the moment, and make us self-conscious, in some particular way. The difference between this and the two previous cases is that we identify the objects arousing us to this consciousness with "ourselves." They are "ours." The typical instance is "property," which really stands for ourselves, and about which we feel a very strong personal sentiment. And the distinction between this phase of self-consciousness and our sympathy lies in the fact that we are *attending*, in sympathy, to the situation of the other person, whereas we fasten our thought upon what is identified exclusively with ourselves, in pride or humility.[24] The reason for this narrowed and concentrated interest, in the latter case, is that every object which excites pride in intrinsically pleasant, as that causing humility is painful.

When imagination, under the influence of our most fundamental concern, meets with an indifferent object, it feels an importance in that object, always greater than anything we discover in the realm of belief; when it meets with a living person, it takes a concern in such a being not unlike that we have in ourselves, and produces the sentiments of love and hate; when it meets with either a thing or a person, which, on its own account, gives us real satisfaction or dissatisfaction, it is filled with that overwhelming sense of self-importance or self-depreciation which we designate with the terms "pride" and "humility."[25] Any per-

[23] *Treatise*, pp. 77 *f.*
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 131.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 85 *f.*, 101 *f.*, 118.

sonal sentiment exceeds, in its force, our feeling about neutral things. But the sentiments that have a regard to ourselves, pride and humility, are the strongest passions known to mankind.[26]

Our consciousness of self seems to be essential, therefore, to the production of all our characteristic human affections. It is obviously a factor in the self-regarding sentiments. It appears to enter into our feeling of admiration or wonder. Through its rôle in sympathy it gives us a sense of the varying importance of things for the life of mankind, and thus plays a part in the "love of truth," the intellectual passion.[27] Above all, it endows us, through sympathy, with a concern for other persons, which makes love and hate possible, to say nothing of the finer sentiments of morality.[28] Thus all the typical phenomena of feeling and conduct depend upon self-consciousness.

Hume was tracing out a grand "system," like the philosophers of an earlier period of modern thought, and very much in the manner of Spinoza. He was speculating, in one of those flights of imagination the dangers of which he well recognised. For this entire province of human existence he was attempting to set up a single *motif*, as he had already tried, with only partial success, in the sphere of human understanding. There he had fixed upon an inward "determination of the mind" as the factor which imparts the irresistible quality of belief to the ideas which we conceive according to the principles of association. Here, to account for sympathy and all its effects, admiration, and the self-regarding sentiments, he ventured to suppose a like internal factor, an all-pervading concern for self. This is active throughout the whole range of human sentiment. But it eludes direct observation. We can only *feel* it with the particular perceptions that occupy

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 129 *f.*, 173.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-5. Cf. *The Sceptic*, and *Of the Standard of Taste*, *Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 216 *f.*, 266 *f.*
[28] Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, 1168b (Everyman, p. 223); *Rhetoric*, Book I, chap. XI, 1371b.

our attention, just as we merely feel that determination of the mind which alone accounts for our inference and belief, and for the supposed necessity of connection among distinct realities. This concern in ourselves is constantly intimated to us, however, in the peculiar mode of knowledge which we refer to, in our speech, as "consciousness."

It is not surprising, then, that Hume should begin to question his own earlier account of the nature of the self, after finishing his last book on the system of the mind. Consciousness now loomed up before him with a reality that it had not possessed before. The person or self seemed more real than anything that enters our ken, despite our inability to seize upon any distinct perception of it. For it was only by admitting a greater initial impressiveness of the self, of which we are conscious, that we could explain how things and persons gain their importance or value from relation to ourselves, and evoke from us passionate sentiment. The vitality and forcefulness of the self in our thinking and action was something, therefore, to which nothing else, of which we have any perception, can approximate. Yet Hume had treated the idea of self only as a "belief." He had traced the notion of personal identity to a source in imagination: it was a product of that determination of the mind which seems to explain our other common opinions. Now it appeared to be more than a belief. For the significance it possessed for us, in our life of sentiment, could only be brought out by setting up a new internal factor, a concern, which is entirely distinct from the determination of the mind in its acts of understanding. There was some flaw, then, in the preceding "system," in so far as it claimed to account for personal identity. It was not sufficient to explain "consciousness," as we all know it. And this made of Hume a much more profound sceptic.

Here is the unhappy, personal confession, given in an *Appendix*, at the end of the *Treatise*: "I neither know how

to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent. If this be not a good *general* reason for scepticism, 'tis at least a sufficient one (if I were not already abundantly supplied) for me to entertain a diffidence and modesty in all my decisions."

Two fundamental views or principles had dictated his original argument, and taken together they now seem to prevent any satisfactory conclusion. One principle is that which Hume had learned from Berkeley: we have no reason to suppose that there are existences other than those with which we are acquainted in perception. Whatever things we distinguish in our perception are *really* distinct, and not mysteriously connected with each other, or inherent in some abstract entity that binds them together without our being aware of it. Nevertheless, we all believe in such remote unities. We think of "kinds," "substances," the "self," and the "external world" as *realities*. We conceive them to be distinct from the perceptions present to the mind. How can we justify such rooted opinions? The only possible argument is that we know these existences from the actual connections we find among our distinct perceptions. But here Hume's own discovery about the necessary connection of cause and effect stands in the way. We never *perceive* any *real* connection between two such distinct items of existence. Thus we are deprived of all ground whatsoever for our beliefs.

Our reasoning had begun with the assumption that the terms "self" and "substance" have some real *meaning* for us. They convey the idea of "something simple or individual." But what is this individual existence, to which we here allude? It is not a simple impression, for we have no distinct perception of ourselves, which we can isolate, and observe, as we do objects. We witness, indeed, many such distinct perceptions, and these alone seem to make up the whole of our mind. Perhaps, then, our idea of the self is the conception, forced upon us by logic, of that being which unites those perceptions into such a whole. But our

first guiding principle is in opposition to this view, for it maintains that we have no reason to assert the existence of anything besides the distinguishable particulars of sense perception or memory. If these particular items are really distinct as we perceive them, we cannot argue that they must also be really united, *because* we *perceive* them. In ordinary life we perceive a table and a chimney, for instance, as two separate items, which actually exist so, whether we are present to observe them or not. Their presence to our perception never suggests to the unsophisticated person the thought that they must be united by something other than themselves, in order to be perceived *as they are.* And since the common opinion about the continued existence of objects independent of our perception has no logic *against* it, (although we may find some difficulty in erecting a sound philosophy on the basis of it), we may conclude that it is entirely possible for all our perceptions to exist "without any common *simple* substance or subject of inhesion." And even if we were successful enough to prove the necessity of a material substance, we should not yet have established the reality of the self. The "composition" of perceptions which makes what we call the "self" is different, in our thinking, from that constituting a substance, for we discover ourselves asking whether our identity as a person subsists under changes of our substance, implying, in such an inquiry, that our identity is more perfect than that of physical matter. Thus we fail utterly to trace our familiar idea of the self to any source in perception or reason. We ought to recognise, then, "that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions."

"So far I seem to be attended with sufficient evidence. But having thus loosened all our particular perceptions, when I proceed to explain the principle of connection, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming

evidence of the precedent reasonings could have induced me to receive it. If perceptions are distinct existences, they form a whole only by being connected together. But no connections among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding. We only *feel* a connection or determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another. It follows, therefore, that the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other. However extraordinary this conclusion may seem, it need not surprise us. Most philosophers seem inclined to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception. The present philosophy, therefore, has so far a promising aspect. But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head."

The theory of those "precedent reasonings" to explain the other common notions of our life is that of the "association of ideas." It is this theory which fails to account for our belief in personal identity. In other words, consciousness is not adequately described as an imaginative relation of distinct perceptions. Its unity is too real for us to be represented as a product of the imagination, however determinate or instinctive we may conceive such an imagination to be.

What causes the trouble for Hume is the undoubted reality of the self of which we are conscious. If he did not believe in it, he would find no difficulties in his system. For it might well be that all the things we distinguish from each other in perception are actually separate in their existence, and continue so beyond our notice. It would be entirely consistent to add that we never perceive real connections among such distinct existences. The reali-

ties of our world might be entirely devoid of any genuine connection or community with each other;—no philosophy can gainsay the possibility, at least, of such a situation. But man without any philosophic deliberation holds to a belief, nevertheless, in the actual unity of all that makes up his "mind": he believes he has a mind. And Hume himself has studied the mind, assuming its existence like every other person. In this study he learns that we cannot discover it in any simple perception, and that we cannot deduce it logically from the fact that we hold many different perceptions together in one act of perception. He can see no other source for the idea, consequently, than the imagination with its natural relating of perceptions. Yet he cannot overlook our ignorance of real unities and connections among these perceptions. If the idea of the self is a product of an imaginative relation, it is the notion of something essentially relative in its being,—dependent upon the perceptions, and not real in its own right. This, however, is not what the self means to us in life. It seems to be an enduring personality, existing distinct from the particulars of our perception and an absolute being. It is that which we all know in our consciousness. And just because Hume firmly acknowledged this fact he had to confess the failure of his theory to explain self-consciousness. He thus felt more and more committed to a scepticism, in regard to human knowledge. He would have to be very careful and modest in all philosophical conclusions.

Strange as it may seem, then, it was probably his own common-sense belief that made of Hume a sceptical philosopher. The same *Appendix* which reveals this confession of doubt about his own system contains, at the beginning, some additional remarks about the nature of belief, emphasising that it is a sentiment arising in independence of our will, and from sources beyond our own control—sources which are, at the same time, "determinate causes and principles." We are *determined* to believe. We cannot help it, and we think and act according to such a necessity

of our nature. As philosophers, too, we can make no escape from the prevailing beliefs of mankind. Therefore, if we must hold to the existence of absolute realities distinct from those of our simple impressions, and if we still cannot find any real source for the connection of all our perceptions, we are compelled to admit that the difficulty is with our philosophy itself. We are ignorant where we fancied we had knowledge. Our philosophic scepticism really expresses our sense of conviction as well as our logical problem.

"For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflections, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions." And this modest attitude shows itself in his whole-hearted approval of the constructive effort of Henry Home to explain personal identity, in the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*.[29] It may be seen, too, in his unwillingness to offer anything at all of his own discussion, in the later *Enquiry*. He would make no dogmatic pretensions of any sort, either to affirm or to deny.

It is rather striking that the *Treatise of Human Nature* has no general conclusion. In mid-career Hume had portrayed his state of mind about his philosophy. It was mainly one of bewilderment, heightened by the emotions of despair and of tenacious hope. What troubled him then was his inability to find any principle, or rule, for true knowledge. Let imagination be ever so contradictory, still, if we can form any principle for its successful employment, we might see fair prospects of truth. We find only certain unwitting principles of "association," but none that we can use methodically in our science and philosophy. And so Hume passed to the investigation of the in-

[29] Letter of date 1746, cited in Tytler's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of H. Home, Lord Kames*, 3rd ed., Edinburgh, 1814, Vol. I, p. 173.

ternal principles in our judgments upon morality and our regular sentiments about persons. At the end of these exploits in the realm of mind, he realised that the mind itself was still left out of account. Reflecting upon his entire work, he discovered that his own philosophical principles actually stood in the way of his high ambition. His scepticism became more mature. It dictated that complete silence about a "system" of human nature, at the place where we should expect some review of his achievement. It became articulate only in those honest confessions made by way of afterthought to the *Treatise*.

Eight years intervened between the issuing of that *Appendix* and the *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*. Hume had been engaged in the studies published under the title, *Essays, Moral and Political*. Without trying to bring out any system, he had presented many of his empirical observations about human nature in politics, society, history, and literature. Through his own further reading and reflection he had become more familiar with the things of major importance to mankind. He had learned, too, the art of self-expression. These *Essays* made their appeal because they dealt with matters of interest to the eighteenth-century public, in a literary form to which it was accustomed. The effect of such work upon Hume, however popular its style, must have been to increase his feeling for the traditional views and convictions of man. He seems to have become, as time went on, more conservative in his attitude toward practical matters. Thus his first revision of the *Treatise*, entitled an *Essay* on the subject of the human understanding, was a very careful piece of writing. For his was no reckless scepticism, ignoring the meaning of the beliefs of ordinary people.

It is very usual to attribute the brevity of this *Essay* to Hume's insatiable ambition for popularity. His omissions seem designed to commend his book to a reading public which would be little capable of profound metaphysics.

The discussions of space and time, of the external world, and of personal identity, would mean nothing to them—and they are, we observe, entirely eliminated. There is not even mention of that last and most baffling topic. But this ought to make us pause. We know, from his own words, why he omitted all reference to the self: his theory failed to account for the meaning of self-consciousness. Perhaps the earlier arguments about space, time, and external existence were not so full of meaning to him then, as they had once seemed, in the first ardor of youthful enterprise.

The ideas of space and time, power, external object, and substance, had been given a status exactly like that of our personal identity. They were all essentially *relative*. Space and time have no meaning apart from the particular perceptions that coexist or succeed each other. We have no simple impression of these realities as existences distinct from those perceptions. They constitute the order, or manner of appearance, of the perceptions. And we come to perceive them at all only because we can form a general idea of the order. But all general or abstract ideas have a source in the imagination, for we never discern the common nature of the kind or species, but only imagine some such unity from the fact of the resemblance between the particular things which we consider to be of that kind. This unity we almost invariably set up as a real entity itself, as something that exists independently of the conditions under which we think of it. It is then, in Hume's own language, a "fiction." Consequently space and time must be "fictions,"—in that sense. And the idea of power follows. For we cannot directly perceive the producing agency among distinct things, and we observe only the conjunctions of certain specific objects with certain others in our experience. The necessity of any connection among them eludes our perception. But, from the natural relation that perceptions have in our mind, we conceive the idea of some real tie or unity among objects or perceptions. This is the "fiction" of real power, force, energy, or causation.

And in the same way we fancy the existence of a *world* of objects distinct from our perceptions, because some perceptions have the natural relations of resemblance and causation. When we consider these objects as truly different from our perceptions we run into an insoluble problem, which has always troubled modern philosophy: we cannot tell anything about the nature of these ultimate objects without relating them to our perceptions exactly as our perceptions are related to each other,—that is, we must make them entirely relative to the particulars of perception in order to understand them. The idea of an absolutely distinct and external existence must be, therefore, a "fiction." And finally, we can account for our idea of the self or person only along these same lines. But in this case, we rebel. The self or mind is too real to be thus relative.

Our philosophy turns back on itself, then, and discovers its own futility. Every idea of a unity that is conceived because of the natural relations of what we perceive cannot represent anything which is as *real* as our distinct perceptions, or even as the relations between them. We cannot show, therefore, that there is an absolute and *single* time or space, or a *universal* force in nature, or an external *universe* of objects, or an *individual* person. Those characters of wholeness or unity are essential to our notions of these things—they cannot, however, be rendered intelligible to us by the theory. Thus what happens in the case of personal identity ought to follow with regard to all these other realities. And our philosophy can only point out the fact that mankind actually believes in these realities, while it presents cogently the logical difficulties of these beliefs. It offers no satisfactory solution.

In the section of the *Enquiry* entitled, *Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy*, Hume proceeded to define his position in exactly this fashion. We all suppose that there is an external universe, but argument fails us when we attempt to define it as something real besides our percep-

tion.[30] Likewise, the ideas of space and time in themselves elude our abstract reasonings in mathematics and metaphysics.[31] And previously we learned that power or causation is to be regarded, logically, as only relative, whatever notion we may have of it in ordinary life.[32] Thus the *Enquiry*, with all its omissions and brevity, seems to be a faithful representation of Hume's philosophy, as it had developed subsequently to those candid admissions of doubt which formed the only conclusion he could write to his *Treatise*.

One discussion survived all such later critical review, namely that of our reasoning in terms of cause and effect. It had been to account for this process of thought that Hume first set up his hypothesis of a natural determination of the mind to connect and relate all its perceptions. The analogies between causal inference and the thinking of general kinds, of an external world, and of a self had inspired him, further, to interpret *all* fundamental opinions of mankind as the product of this one type of "association." The great, persistent "complex ideas" and general conceptions of human life were to be traced, as a whole, to this instinctive imagination. The *Treatise* was to replace the "system" of Locke's comprehensive *Essay*. But when Hume had applied his theory to one after the other of these common beliefs, and had gone on to pursue his investigations into the conduct of human life under "passion" and moral government, he seems to have felt that this view had varying success as an explanation of these diverse phenomena. For it obviously failed to explain our consciousness of self. It showed defects even in accounting for our notion of an external world. It still seemed plausible, indeed, as a way of showing how we form abstract or general ideas—and Hume threw out a hint to this effect.[33] But in any case it was clearly a true

[30] *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 124 *f*.
[31] *Ibid*., pp. 128 *f*.
[32] *Ibid*., pp. 50 *ff*.
[33] *Essays*, p. 129 n.

"solution" for the problem of causal inference alone. Here it had taken its inception, and here it remained a valuable and a novel theory.[34] Thus Hume concentrated, with great care, upon his original study of the nature of causal reasoning.

It was of the first importance that the problem should be made clear. For no one had really attended to that question, raised in the *Treatise*, which went to the heart of all science and philosophy. We believe in the existence of facts beyond what we can witness through immediate perception or memory. These beliefs in matters of fact constitute the whole of our detailed knowledge of the world. We arrive at them by an act of the mind which we call "inference" from cause to effect, or effect to cause. Our beliefs involve, therefore, the causal relation, whose essential meaning is the necessity of the connection among things. We consider, too, that the processes of thought whereby we attain to these truths of fact are acts of reasoning. But reasoning implies that we proceed from the thought of one item to another, as from "cause" to "effect," by an insight into their necessary connection. Here, then, is the primary question: do we discern any bond of

[34] The theory broke down, too, as an explanation of sympathy. When Hume composed his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, he made a point of saying that our concern for others, or humanity, was an ultimate fact about human nature, and that it could not be derived from anything more fundamental in the mind. (*Essays*, Vol. II, p. 207 n.) He was probably influenced in this declaration by his general allegiance to the doctrines of Shaftesbury, Butler, and Hutcheson. He believed, with them, in the reality of unselfish feeling and conduct in mankind and asserted that the instances of it far outnumber the instances in which people act exclusively for their own interests. Though the force of our human sentiments is less, in any direct conflict of the interests of persons, than that of self-love, our sympathy is a prevailing influence. Hume would give no countenance to a view that traced our actual concern for others to selfish calculation. The hypothesis he himself had sponsored in the *Treatise* did not really imply this, for the sympathy was not supposed to arise from a thinking about oneself but from an impulsive reference, or concern, which is antecedent to all distinctions of *mine* and *thine*. It was entirely appropriate for Hume to waive this question of the origin of fellow-feeling, because any mistake as to his meaning would set his empirical theory of morals in a false light.

unity between any two distinct realities, such as the cause and the effect? Everything turns upon the answer to this question. If we have no clear perception of this relation itself, we shall feel obliged, as philosophers, to place less value upon any conclusion we form in terms of cause and effect, because, when we *know* that the relation is not real, in the sense that the things we perceive are real, we must attribute a lesser degree of reality to anything inferred on the strength of that relation. And this affects not only our belief in remote objects but also that in the very objects of memory and sensation themselves. For we cannot believe in such present realities, unless they have some relationship, or necessary connection, with other objects of experience. Thus all knowledge and information about existence depends upon a solution of our problem. How do we actually *know* this relation of cause and effect?

The solution presupposes, at the outset, a confession of ignorance. We can never discern any unity or necessity of connection among the distinct existences which we perceive, and we do not know causality to be real in the way qualities and things are real. Yet, for all that, we continue to believe in the reality of whatever we infer on the grounds of that causal relation. Causality may not be an item of perception, but it is certainly assumed by all of us to be a factor in nature, essential to the reality of everything else which we can distinctly perceive. It is, then, a "natural relation" holding *for* nature. And if it is not to be identified with any observable fact, or with any principle of logic, it must be attributed, in the end, to our own human nature. We know causality, therefore, as a habit of our own mind, a "custom." Here is a factor acknowledged to be real in human affairs, though not perceivable in the form of objects. Thus the causal relation wins, at last, a genuine status in nature, and reasoning in terms of it may actually be said to *prove* the existence of matters of fact. Knowledge seems possible, by virtue of these efficient customs of the mind. There is truly a "pre-estab-

lished harmony" between human thought and natural events, brought about by the habits of thinking that are born of the intercourse of man and Nature. Exactly how this vital relationship has itself come to exist we can never know—it is an ultimate fact. It is sufficient for us, that all the conclusions we draw which are founded upon past experience make life possible. They prove their worth just in so doing.

Hence Academic scepticism is an affirmation of the value of causal reasoning. Hume tended, therefore, to give up his original distinction between imagination and reason, wherein he had identified reason with logical thought in accordance with the law of contradiction. It may have been due to this tendency to widen the use of reason that he omitted from the *Enquiry* that very significant argument on *Why a Cause is Always Necessary*, for he had proceeded in it as if the only "reason" which ought to be given for anything were the sheer impossibility of the contrary, according to the principle of logic. But he had come to recognise that human thinking has a great variety of forms, not to be reduced to each other. His very caution in the later book exhibits this, when he refuses to pretend that his own account of causal inference would also explain the supposition of an external world or personal identity. He had already distinguished two forms of genuine knowledge: demonstration, whereby we obtain the abstract truths of mathematics and logic, and proof, which establishes the existence of any matter of fact. And thus he seems to have veered away from his earlier language and discussions whenever they might, in any way, throw doubt upon the validity of our inferences from experience. In his own opinion he had given a plausible "solution" of the problem which he himself had been the first to propose.

But Academic scepticism is, at the same time, a restraining philosophy. We interest ourselves in realities that are conceived to be neither the objects of perception nor the relations of what we perceive. Time, space, power, the ex-

ternal universe, personality are all such things. The nearest we can come to understanding them is to regard them as existences relative to the particulars of our experience, but nothing more. Their absolute unity or existence distinct from what we perceive by our senses or memory is confessedly imaginary. And not only these realities but others, about which the *Treatise* had been silent, fall into this category—"the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from, and to eternity."[35] The whole of Nature and its Unique Cause pass the bounds of our present knowledge.

However, this is no Pyrrhonian scepticism. It does not affirm that such realities are illusory, or even that they cannot be known in some form. There is something startling in Hume's declaration that the "best and most solid foundation" for the beliefs in a God and a Future Life is "*faith* and divine revelation." We may interpret this, if we please, as an ironical or mocking deference to current theology, but it arrests us, notwithstanding. It suggests possibilities of thought beyond these more regular operations of the mind which we have been studying. It has the same effect upon us as that footnote which constitutes the very last word of the *Enquiry*: that this philosophy of causation puts an end to the negative dogmatism of ancient scepticism, which was expressed in the "impious maxim," *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, because it shows the *possibility* of "the creation of matter" by the will of a Deity, or by any other agency we choose to fancy. These remarks about religion have often seemed exaggerated, or even insincere. But they do startle us, and that may have been their sole purpose. They open our minds to the opportunities for further research and knowledge which this philosophy holds forth to us. Certainly Hume had a serious meaning, in making them, for he himself was engaged, during the years immediately following, with the problem whether a Deity is the cause of the order of nature, or nature is sufficient to

[35] *Essays*, p. 133.

itself, the whole of all being, the ultimate reality for us. In other words, he recognised the existence of religious thought, and inquired, honestly, into its nature and value.

Of one who would argue to a radical scepticism, from the preceding discussions, Hume would ask: What is your meaning?[36] There is certainly no "principle" on which we can justify so "excessive" a doubt. That is precisely what the entire argument has revealed to us. Now our thought runs as naturally to those "fictitious" entities, like time, space, power, Nature, and the Cause of Nature, as it does from one particular item to another among our actual perceptions. On what grounds can we deny value to this supervening imagination, if we cannot assign any principle to the simplest and most established acts of our understanding? True, we cannot regard such imagination to be warranted in the way inferences are, when we make them with the support of experience: the beliefs in these realities beyond perception discover a notable lack of consistency. They show us, better than any ordinary operation of the mind, that no discernible and useful principle is to be found. But this makes us all the more keenly aware of our deficiency in insight with regard to the most stable of the beliefs of mankind. From such acknowledged ignorance no philosopher can reasonably pronounce against any opinions that seem really to count in human affairs.

It was the metaphysician in him that determined Hume to remain a sceptic in philosophy. He would be satisfied with nothing less than some intelligible "principle" of reason. Knowing that he lacked such a key to knowledge, he held carefully to the plain beliefs which he could not deny and, at the same time, to the logic which he could clearly affirm. He was in suspense between the necessities of nature and those of thought. This defined his scepticism. And it was his love of truth, rather than his love of popular applause, that dictated the modest revision of his book on the *Understanding*, in the course of which he left out the

[36] *Essays*, p. 131.

discussions once included in his "system." He no longer set such store by his pretentious delineation of the whole of the mind. He was not sure of his constructive theory beyond a certain few points. One thing he knew—he had raised a problem of the utmost importance to human knowledge. From this he would not allow us to be diverted, even by his own attempt to make a reconstruction in philosophy. He aimed, therefore, to challenge the minds of others and to make them see something of the new prospect that lay before them. The quality of his scepticism, at this period, is finely characterised by the title he chose eventually for his books;—it was a spirit of "*enquiry*."

CHAPTER TEN

Essays to Illustrate the Enquiry

I KNOW not, whether the reader will readily apprehend this reasoning. I am afraid, that, should I multiply words about it, or throw it into a greater variety of lights, it would only become more obscure and intricate. In all abstract reasonings, there is one point of view, which, if we can happily hit, we shall go farther towards illustrating the subject, than by all the eloquence and copious expression in the world."[1]

This was Hume's concluding observation to his treatment of causality in the *Enquiry*. There follow close upon it several interesting essays, some appearing for the first time in this book, others being revisions of material from the *Treatise*. They form a distinct group by themselves. The first in order is an essay on *Liberty and Necessity*, which is thus in close juxtaposition with the section dealing with the idea of power or necessity. After it are some observations upon the *Reason of Animals*. Then come the entirely new documents, not published with the *Treatise*, the essay on *Miracles* and that on *A Particular Providence and a Future State*. All these discussions show, in some way, Hume's meaning with regard to necessity, empirical reasoning, and belief. They are applications of his thought to some questions of genuinely practical concern to the common man. They are illustrations, in other words, of the essential ideas of this philosophy. Only after presenting these essays did Hume attempt to define, at last, the position of Academic scepticism.

The essay on *Liberty and Necessity* had originally been a preface to a study in Book Two of the *Treatise*,—*Of the Will and Direct Passions*. It was in the manner of Spinoza, who opened the Third Part of his *Ethic*, *On the Origin and*

[1] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 65.

Nature of the Affects, with a fine statement of his reasons for including man among the phenomena of nature and not exempting his life and conduct from natural law, merely because he enjoyed the consciousness of voluntary action. Hume seems to have taken his title from a similar essay in Hobbes' *Tripos*, which contained, as well, a discourse on *Human Nature*. Besides these two predecessors, Malebranche and Bishop Butler must have had some influence upon Hume, for he offers his own discussion of the subject as a "reconciling project,"—doing justice, in other words, to both "freedom" and "necessity" when the meaning of the terms is rightly understood.

From his own investigations into the conduct of human affairs it was clear to Hume that the exercise of the will shows the same uniformity and regularity as all other events of nature. Otherwise there would be no science of history, nor the political and economic sciences. These bodies of reliable knowledge would not be possible if human motives were not regularly connected with certain outward circumstances, and productive, too, of a uniform order of conduct, generally recognisable in all nations and ages. To be sure, this uniformity is never perfect. Mankind differs at all times and places. But no historian accepts even these differences without treating them as instances of general types of behavior. If morals vary, in many divers lands, it only means that custom and education play a considerable rôle in human life everywhere—to understand the specific circumstances of a people's life is to grasp the motives of their morality as well as their other convictions. History has the status of a science, indeed, because it thus throws light upon particular nations and ages of mankind. It is an interpretation of different ways of life in terms of our own experience. Thus we cannot pass a moral judgment upon character and conduct in our own generation without presupposing that the motives and actions of other people are those of ourselves under the same conditions. Our aesthetic criticism, too, pro-

nounces upon the verisimilitude of the poem or the work of art—that is, upon its naturalness or unnaturalness—which implies that we have some general conception of a normal human nature. But we need not go further than the most ordinary transactions of business to see this assumption of real uniformity in the will of man. Society is possible only because each worker does his part with the expectation that certain motives will necessarily operate in others, so that he can depend upon their actions. He looks to the civic authorities to protect him in his labor and in its exchange for other goods. He relies upon his experience that other persons have needs like his own and must buy his products and dispose of theirs to him. Without all these assurances no civilisation would come into being or endure. And the more extensive these relationships between human beings become, the greater number of such voluntary deeds they require—all appearing as necessary as any other matters of fact. In view of those obvious truths we must acknowledge a necessity in the events with which human will is concerned, a necessity nowise different from that found everywhere else in nature.

Has freedom of the will no meaning then? Hume is not denying that we can deliberately initiate action, that is, "will" it. Such a fact of consciousness is undeniable, especially by one who is trying to interpret the mind of the common people. When we are intent upon an act which we are about to perform, we are restrained by nothing within or without us. We are as free as we ever imagine ourselves to be. For it is one thing to be about to act and another, to contemplate the deed itself as a fact. When we *observe* our actions, we see them in the order of nature, exhibiting a uniformity which makes us regard them as the necessary effects of the known causes. But at the moment of willing them our thought runs forward to what is still to be done and we are thus occupied with our coming action, unable yet to consider it as an accomplished fact.[2]

[2] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 77 n.

The reality of this consciousness of intention or design is what liberty means.

Philosophers have fancied a "freedom of will" as a special "power" of a spiritual agent to effect things without regard to the laws of nature. This freedom is spurious. It is the exact correlate of the old false notion of physical necessity. So long as thinking men assume that they can know necessity or power in material phenomena they compel others who are equally convinced of their own personal freedom from physical constraint to suppose another power or free agency in themselves. But Hume's analysis of causation has thrown light upon that vaunted knowledge of necessity. The real impact of his criticism is against the older materialism. It shows us "the narrow extent of science when applied to material causes." "We change no circumstance in the received orthodox system with regard to the will, but only in that with regard to material objects and causes."[3] For the objective meaning of necessity is simply the constant conjunction of events in nature. The uniformity exists only for a mind which observes these events and supposes that they will continue in the same form for the future as in the past. The "necessity" is intelligible only as an inward determination of the mind, and it cannot oust a phase of mind equally present and ultimate, namely, the deliberate intention or conscious will to act. And when we realise this, we need not assert any mysterious power in ourselves, in order to justify our consciousness of real purpose.

This discussion of *Liberty and Necessity* is actually, then, a "reconciling project."[4] The fact of human will is upheld along with the universality of causal order. Both these truths must be asserted for the sake of morality and our scientific integrity. Unless there were an acknowledged regularity in the operation of human motives we should

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 80; cf. *Treatise*, Vol. II, p. 190.
[4] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 77. Cf. Butler *Analogy*, chap. VI, "Of the Opinion of Necessity, Considered as Influencing Practice."

never be able to impute actions to character and hold ourselves morally responsible for our own deeds. The same basic truth enables the students of the human sciences, the historian, economist, political scientist, and even the critics of art and literature and morals, to reveal the general principles of human nature. Indeed, Hume is here justifying his own vital interest in the study of history, economics, society, and morals.

He is interested, too, in religion as a phenomenon of human nature, and in the motives for it. But he is not so successful here, in reconciling with theology his idea of necessity as a universal aspect of matters of fact. There is a question which he cannot solve: if causes hold for all events, whether among material bodies or in the relations of mind to the world, then all evil must be traced, ultimately, to God. For our own motives and all the other springs of activity in the world are supposed to be dependent, ultimately, upon the Creator. This seems to take away our moral responsibility, as well as the perfection of God. A philosophical solution of this problem is to assert the perfection of the whole universe in itself and to ascribe the seeming badness to our ignorance, or to our limited view of the creation. It remains, then, the best possible world; God is truly good; the evils are, in the end, good things for us. But Hume suspects an answer of this sort. He cannot forget that we never rise to such an eminence in life that we can interpret its ills and the crimes of man himself as genuine goods. Our morality is founded upon very natural judgments without any such straining of imagination. Our moral distinctions of good and bad are more real to us than this perfection of the Whole. And these discriminations of value are independent of such highly speculative notions about the first and ultimate Cause of all things and its Divine Intentions. Whatever ideas we may form, therefore, of this Being and His Ways, we cannot forsake our primary recognition of values and morality. There is no true philosophical solution for our

problem: how God can be absolutely good and at the same time the creator of beings who find an absolute distinction in their world between good and evil. In the last analysis, this question reduces to that age-long one which has baffled theology as well as philosophy: whence comes evil? Hume admits that he has nothing to contribute toward a solution of it. But he asks whether we should reject his theory of "necessity" because it fails to put an end to a long-standing issue which no theory has ever decided. He would be judged by what his view reveals about "common life" rather than by what it fails to show us in regard to these lastingly "sublime mysteries."

There is a touch of irony, then, in the introduction, at this place, of the next study: *The Reason of Animals.* The mind of man is found typical of the very beasts. Reasoning is, in all cases, a proceeding to anticipate experience on the strength of analogy. Animals have instincts as well as reason in that sense. But this distinction is not an ultimate one, for "the experimental reasoning itself, which we possess in common with beasts, and on which the whole conduct of life depends, is nothing but a species of instinct or mechanical power, that acts in us unknown to ourselves; and in its chief operations, is not directed by any such relations or comparisons of ideas, as are the proper objects of our intellectual faculties."

Now belief is also instinctive, being our natural attitude toward the conclusions we form on the grounds of our experience. Yet certain reasoners have argued for the reality of "miracles," claiming that we can believe them just as we believe any matter of fact in common life. By a miracle they mean "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent."[5] It is something contrary to the

[5] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 93 n. Cf. Montaigne, *Essais*, Book I, chap. xxii, "De la Coustume"; Malebranche, *Meditations Chrêtiennes*, Vol. II, p. 98.

whole of our experience. For every natural law expresses some invariable order of events in the past, and whatever violates such law contradicts the total deliverance of our past experience. What strikes Hume as important in all this is the *claim* that we can actually *believe* such an absolute contrariety to be a fact when all the evidence available proves the law of nature. His study of belief would lead him to expect that no such contrariety can ever be believed with the fullness of conviction that attends a proof, for the very contrariety must diminish the force of the belief, and the greater that opposition, the less real the probability. Theoretically, a belief in miracles ought to be merely the conception of a bare possibility, not a living belief. Yet people profess to believe them, in the true sense of the term. By what procedure have they attained such faith? Is it a natural process of reasoning, or a highly sophistical one, or something we have not yet reckoned with in our theory?

It is natural to believe whatever experience warrants. Unconsciously we anticipate new events in terms of the kinds of occurrences with which we are familiar. And the outcome of every such natural transition of thought is the sentiment of belief. Hence a phenomenon not at all conformable to our experience can never be a fact for us without some wonderful misbehavior of the mind itself.

It might be argued that every conclusion by way of inference is genuinely new. The similarity of events in the past directs us to the conception of something which will continue that type of event in the future. Thus novelty is real. Why may we not admit a novelty so real that the whole of our past experience will not make a uniform system with it? It is possible, indeed, to say this. But the question is, on what conditions will we be able to *believe* in such an absolutely unusual fact? Under what circumstances would it be more natural to believe the miracle than to doubt the evidence offered for it? The conditions would be these: "that its falsehood would be more miracu-

lous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish." Were we so indisputably sure of a person's testimony that its falsity would constitute a greater opposition to our experience than the alleged miracle itself, we could naturally believe the miracle without qualms. In other words, did we know a divine person to begin with, we might believe in divine actions contrary to all nature.

So much for miracles, if we grant perfect evidence for the phenomena. Suppose, however, that we are to believe in their reality on the testimony, not of a Deity, but of men. Does our experience warrant us in accrediting at their face value any human reports of miraculous fact? We have too much acquaintance with human nature ever to do this: the passions of surprise and wonder and the spirit of religiosity are motives with whose operation we are familiar. The circumstances under which miracles appear are always suspicious, for the people who publish them are usually ignorant and uncivilised. They are not skilled in weighing evidence and detecting errors. All such data reduce the value of the historical tradition. Consequently, "no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof." "A miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion." And religion itself cannot arise from so dubious a source. Thus those who rest the whole case for Christianity upon the fact of miracles are dangerous supporters of the creed. For if we are confined to such evidence alone, as the ground of our faith, we should have to conclude "that the Christian religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one."[6] If we believe all these things, we are conscious of a continued miracle in our very understanding itself, a process of thought destroying the normal and characteristic and natural operation of the

[6] *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 108; Cf. Montaigne, *Apologie*: "C'est aux Chrestiens une occasion de croire, que de rencontrer une chose incroyable; elle est d'autant plus selon raison, qu'elle est contre l'humaine raison: si elle estoit selon raison ce ne seroit plus miracle."

mind, so that we feel "a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

It has often been observed that Hume here repudiates the ideas of contemporary theology. Sometimes he is regarded as mocking, and again as cynically ironical, or even malicious. There is, indeed, an unmistakable animus, in these conclusions, against the pretensions of theology. But an honest reason for it may be seen. So long as people think a genuine belief can arise in any other way than by the influence of our experience upon the imagination, they will misconstrue the nature of all truth in science as well as in daily life. Moreover, they will be perversely blind to the dominant character of the human mind, which Hume is revealing: its native presumption that the future will be similar to the past, or that the course of nature is uniform. And besides, Hume himself was deeply concerned with the real motives to belief in things supernatural, and he had long been thinking that the sole foundation of belief in a Being such as the Deity is the very order of nature itself.[7] But he had met with grave difficulties, too, in satisfying himself with regard to the theistic argument. Though he accepted human intention or design as an indisputable fact, and appreciated the view that the uniformity of nature might well be consistent with a universal Mind and Will analogous to that of man, still he found an alternative position equally credible. It was a question whether the order of nature would *prove* a Providence, or anything else beyond Nature. This was the genuine philosophical problem. But those who arrogantly thrust forward miracles as the foundation of belief were striking at the only fact upon which such a belief could possibly be established: the order of nature itself. They introduced Chance into the whole affair. And with it present all hope of a philosophical conclusion would vanish. Hence the per-

[7] Cf. *Treatise*, Vol. I, pp. 456, note 2, 532-3; and the later *Natural History of Religion, Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 309, 313, 316, 325, 361.

sonal animus in these remarks about theologians who make so much of miracles.

There follows, then, Hume's own first treatment of the subject of religion, a discourse *Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State.* A friend who likes the sceptical paradoxes undertakes to defend the Epicurean philosophy before Hume himself, who is to act the rôle of the "more philosophical part" of the "mob of Athens." The Epicurean pleads that no philosopher should be persecuted for his speculative opinions, on the ground that such abstract views can have no influence upon the moral life of men. Morality thrives independently of either religious or irreligious conceptions of the world. And to justify such a position, this imaginary Epicurus makes an examination of the Stoic arguments for a Providence and a Future State, showing that they yield no new conclusions beyond the facts from which they proceed, and hence, that they do not further, in any way, the cause of a righteous civic life.

In the first edition of the *Essays* which contained the *Enquiry* (1748), Hume entitled this particular discussion: *Of the Practical Consequences of Natural Religion.* For the position of Epicurus is that no practical consequences whatsoever ensue from speculative views of religion, implying that none will follow from any atheistic opinions. But Hume changed the title in all later editions. It did not convey the point of the whole discussion. For he himself, as spokesman for the common people, takes exception to this denying of value to the religious opinions. He readily admits, for reasons of his own, that toleration ought to be the only attitude of the State toward philosophy. But he is disinclined to assert that the opinions of mankind regarding things supernatural are without influence upon the moral conduct of human life. In fact, to deny all efficacy to such views is to affirm that they are

not genuine beliefs, for the test of a belief is its effect upon human action and life. For Hume is willing to admit that the things men think about the Deity and the Life to Come are important to them. Just as he has asserted the reality of the conscious will, the initiation of action through decisions of the mind, so now he maintains the reality, for ordinary men, of these objects which form the content of their religion. There is no denying the fact of their *belief*. And the real debate concerns the meaning of this belief and the way in which it has arisen. What is it that induces men to believe in Providence and Immortal Life? This is the true subject of the discussion. Hence the change of title.

The Stoic argument is an inference to a cause from certain evidence in nature. There is an order of nature intelligible to us because we know how we arrange and plan things in the affairs over which we have some control—the order of nature suggests, by analogy, a Being like ourselves, with Intelligence and Will. Now the rules by which we ought to argue prescribe that we should proportion the cause to the observed effect in accordance with our experience. If the course of nature exhibits a certain degree of intelligence, will, and goodness, we must conclude the reality of a Being precisely as knowing and powerful and benevolent.[8] But no more, and here the Stoics outreach their argument. Their Deity is superlatively wise, mighty, and good. God is infinitely real in his attributes. Then, having thus defined the cause so that it is incomparably more than anything nature reveals, the Stoics argue that such a real and perfect Being will make nature itself realise an excellence beyond what we know at present, continuing and bettering this mortal life. Their whole system advances beyond all sound reasoning, both in inferring a Deity and in deducing a Future Life from the existence of the Deity. It is more imaginative than rational thought. And besides being unphilosophical, it is quite useless for

[8] Cf. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, Part II, sec. 3, *Future State*, to end.

human life. From experience we learn that virtue is truly more valuable than vice, if we are to enjoy the benefits of a good life in human society. The pleasures and pains and utilities teach us how to live. Nothing we should deduce from the facts of a Providence and a Future Life could possibly yield us any higher wisdom and morality than this which we naturally develop in the course of human experience. It seems entirely futile, then, to treat these religious views as in any way essential to the maintenance of society and the ethical welfare of mankind.

Hume asks this modern Epicurus whether we cannot argue from our experience even of an imperfect order of nature. For this order is not complete, indeed, at any time. We simply presume upon it in all our reasoning, in daily life and scientific procedure. But we are surely familiar with purposes in human affairs which have not been entirely realised, and we may argue, quite reasonably in such cases, to the fulfillment of these intentions and to the prescience and will of the persons connected with the act. Likewise we may look upon the existing order of nature as being merely the present tendency of things, and form for ourselves a conception of the end of this tendency and its cause, in realities which are beyond the nature we know by experience. When we are intent upon an act in our own lives, and "will" it, we attribute to ourselves a certain quality of freedom which we cannot observe in the accomplished necessary fact. So here, we may conceive a mind and will in nature generally, because we recognise intention in it and discern no absolute necessity in the order of natural events.

But Epicurus stands by the rules of causal argument. The whole of nature is supposed to be a fact and from it the Stoics argue to another fact—yet both these so-called facts are infinitely different from anything in our own experience. We do know men and their ordinary motives. We know what something in the course of construction is like, and we are guided by experience of human purposes

in our inference of a finished work and a designer. But Nature means the Whole of existence in itself. It is a unique thing. If it is a "fact," it is one without any parallel; and to infer a Deity from it is to conceive of a still more singular and individual Being. Wherever there is no varied experience of either the causes or the effects we cannot really argue at all concerning them. And we shall certainly not govern our lives by such wild fancies of the imagination.

It is not often noticed that it is Hume himself who takes issue with his friend. "You conclude, that religious doctrines and reasonings *can* have no influence on life, because they *ought* to have no influence; never considering, that men reason not in the same manner as you do, but draw many consequences from the belief of a divine Existence, and suppose that the Deity would inflict punishments on vice, and bestow rewards on virtue, beyond what appear in the ordinary course of nature. Whether this reasoning of theirs be just or not, is no matter. Its influence on their life and conduct must still be the same. And, those, who attempt to disabuse them of such prejudices, may, for aught I know, be good reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of society, in one respect, more easy and secure." However defective may be the reasoning for it, there is an effectual and valuable religious belief. And this phenomenon illustrates one of the essential points in the preceding study of causation: even when we have experience, it is not by reasoning that we extend that experience beyond itself and believe in the reality of something genuinely new and informing. No citations of the proper rules for argument are of any avail to hinder or direct the inference to realities beyond all of nature,—God and the Future Life.

Hume is not willing to countenance the employment of force against atheists. Toleration ought to be the prac-

tice of all governments, for speculative thinkers are not enthusiasts or propagandists, and their critical views cannot really influence people against their nature. It is because the natural judgment of mankind asserts the reality of a God and Immortality that we need take no precaution lest critics should root out such beliefs. The real danger would lie in commencing to persecute for any kind of speculative opinion, since the government might then blunder into coercion on "points where the generality of mankind are more deeply interested and concerned," both to its own undoing and to the misery of the common people.

This thought of the deep-lying interests and concerns of mankind leads Hume to raise a point about all such philosophical criticism of religious views. "But there occurs to me, with regard to your main topic, a difficulty, which I shall just propose to you, without insisting on it; lest it lead into reasonings of too nice and delicate a nature. In a word, I much doubt whether it be possible for a cause to be known only by its effect (as you have all along supposed) or to be of so singular and particular a nature as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object, that has ever fallen under our observation. It is only when two *species* of objects are found to be constantly conjoined, that we can infer the one from the other; and were an effect presented, which was entirely singular, and could not be comprehended under any known *species*, I do not see, that we could form any conjecture or inference at all concerning its cause. If experience and observation and analogy be, indeed, the only guides which we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature; both the effect and cause must bear a similarity and resemblance to other effects and causes, which we know, and which we have found, in many instances, to be conjoined with each other. I leave it to your own reflection to pursue the consequences of this principle." The consequences ought to be: we have no idea of God and Immortality. But this is

so only if we argue the point in the manner of the philosophical Stoics. If God is utterly unique, it is difficult to see how God's existence could be *proved* from experience of nature. And if God is believed to exist, it is equally hard to understand why that reality of God should carry with it an assurance of a world beyond this one with which we are acquainted. But the generality of mankind somehow find these conceptions intelligible. They believe in the reality of God and Immortality. And if their processes of thought be not strict reasoning, we still have the problems of determining what kind of thought it really is, and what the religious ideas mean for their experience. Theoretically, we cannot see how a conjecture or inference of anything beyond all nature is possible. But it is a fact, nevertheless, and it deserves more extended study than this Essay in the *Enquiry* affords. So, in the very year of the second edition (1751), when Hume changed the title of this discussion to show that it has to do with the beliefs in Providence and a Future Life, he commenced work upon the *Dialogues* and the *Natural History of Religion*, examining in them the special experience and interests of humanity impelling us to believe in religious verities.

Meantime the discussion as it stands illustrates very well the crucial point of Hume's entire study of causation. What sticks with the reasoner in the supposed argument for theism is the impulsive way in which people believe in the existence of things beyond their past experience. They pay no heed to rule or reason. They simply make some inference or other. They seem to be determined to believe something wherever they are interested or concerned for the purposes of life. They proceed by a sort of analogy from experience, but they conceive things which they could not justify beforehand from their experience. God seems to give meaning to the order of nature and then to yield additional facts with respect to that order. It is all difficult to understand, if we want a rational account of the whole matter. But this adventure of the mind is only

a more dramatic instance of what takes place in every inference and belief. We do the same thing piecemeal in our lives. Every inference advances upon our existing knowledge and gives us more law or order in nature than what we observe in the beginning. It starts from a bold generalisation of our experience and then adds new things to it. It is ever treating our world as a whole, or single order, only to reach forward to some new fact that is needed to make it completely so. This activity of the human mind is not founded upon a knowledge of necessary connections between events—it is only a determination or instinctive tendency of our own nature, whose typical workings we may scrutinise without ever gaining insight into its rationale.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Argument Concerning Theism

You would perceive by the sample I have given you, that I make Cleanthes the hero of the dialogue." This was written on March 10, 1751.[1] That hero, Cleanthes, like the ancient Stoic or the modern Berkeley, is a philosophical "dogmatist" arguing for theism. Opposed to him is a philosophical "sceptic," Philo, whose tendencies are those of Cicero in the *De Natura Deorum* and of such writers as Montaigne and Francis Bacon. But this traditional scepticism has new point for Hume, in the light of his own studies of knowledge and human nature. He has been made more keenly aware of the great presumption of the mind in all reasoning from experience, and he sees no hope of a stable knowledge of anything, save by the guarded, accurate method of scientific thought, as he himself has employed it in his studies of morality, politics, history, and economics. He wants to evaluate natural theology according to the criterion of natural science. And again, because he has been unable to define clearly the nature of mind or self he presses home a doubt whether we ought to personify the Deity. Yet theism withstands all such questioning. In the first five Parts of the *Dialogues* it emerges as the position of the author, who was not sure, however, that it would appear unequivocally so, for he invited his friend, Sir Gilbert Elliot, to help him at a certain juncture in the argument.[2] This portion of the work seems, then, to be contemporaneous with the *Natural History of Religion*, where theism is offered us as a valid belief.

In the year 1776, scarcely three months before his death, Hume wrote to Strahan about the *Dialogues*: "I there in-

[1] Burton, Vol. I, p. 331.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 336.

troduce a sceptic, who is indeed refuted, and at last gives up the argument, nay confesses that he was only amusing himself by all his cavils; yet before he is silenced, he advances several topics, which will give umbrage, and will be deemed very bold and free, as well as much out of the common road."[3] It seems, then, that Philo not only raises objections to the argument for theism but also puts forward quite new and extraordinary positions. Even in regard to that early "sample" Hume had told Elliot that the views of the subject were "so new as to challenge some attention."[4] And after he returned to the *Dialogues* from the writing of the *Natural History of Religion*, he became engrossed, apparently, with these venturesome speculations in "the calm, though obscure regions of philosophy." He thus found it necessary, upon a final revision of the whole work, to assure his friend and publisher, Strahan, that it was not his final intention to make Philo the hero of the piece. But the "sceptical hypothesis" does occupy the stage during the last six parts of the discussion. It is what we call, today, "naturalism."[5]

Despite his different leanings during these two periods of composition, Hume was aiming always at the "spirit of dialogue." His model was the *De Natura Deorum* of Cicero, which he had been studying over and over again during the progress of his thinking.[6] There was a "tolerable equality maintained among the speakers." It was this true dialogue style that Hume missed in the *Dialogue* appended to the *Enquiry concerning Morals*—for there he made the "dogmatist" the hero, and he was, consequently, "diffident" of its merit, though partly pleased with the performance.[7] He had better success with the first sketch of

[3] G. B. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 330.
[4] Burton, Vol. I, p. 337.
[5] Warburton had employed the term, opprobriously, in speaking of the tendencies he observed in the *Natural History of Religion*.—Burton, Vol. II, p. 35 n.
[6] Cf. *Essays, The Rise of the Arts and Sciences*, (date, 1742), Vol. I, p. 189 n; *Natural History*, etc. (date, *circa* 1751), Vol. II, p. 352.
[7] Burton, Vol. I, pp. 321, 344 n-5 n.

the *Dialogues*. Though making Cleanthes spokesman for himself he did the part of the sceptic so well that he needed the help of his friend Elliot to strengthen the theistic argument and he had to assure this friend of his own sincere belief in it. "Any propensity you imagine I have to the other side, crept in upon me against my will. . . . Had it been my good fortune to live near you, I should have taken on me the character of Philo, in the dialogue, which you'll own I could have supported naturally enough; and you would not have been averse to that of Cleanthes."[8] Thus there was no nonsense to be put into the mouth of either the sceptic or the dogmatist. Truth issued only from their discussion as a whole. The *Dialogues* were to be an example of genuine philosophical thinking, in the fashion of ancient Academic scepticism, which moved in the tradition of Socrates.

In order to put us into the proper attitude toward the coming play of wit, Hume speaks to us directly, in a prologue or preface,—a letter addressed by "Pamphilus" to "Hermippus." This must have been written some time after that first sample of the *Dialogues*. It advises plainly that we should follow the argument in its course and not hang on to the words of some one hero or other. Neither Philo nor Cleanthes is authorised to speak exclusively for Hume. Indeed, we can identify the author only with that "Pamphilus" who writes out these conversations from a recollection, as he says, of his early youth, and who feels competent now, in his maturity, to set them forth as he once heard them and to appraise their meaning. This seems to be the Hume who had, just a short time before writing these dialogues, "burned an old manuscript book, wrote before I was twenty, which contained, page after page, the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head. It began with an anxious search after arguments, to confirm the

[8] *Burton*, Vol. I, pp. 331-2.

common opinion; doubts stole in, dissipated, returned; were again dissipated, returned again; and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason."[9] "Pamphilus" is Hume, dramatising his own youthful debates that had once led to such momentous discoveries in regard to human knowledge and the nature of man. It is this Pamphilus who passes the final judgment, after making significant comments from time to time throughout the course of the discussion. But he is no participant in it—and we are to take from him this hint, to detach ourselves from any personal interest in one character or the other, for the sake of that truth which all the views together will represent.

In 1761 the *Dialogues* were completed as we now read them.[10] Two years later Hume was pleading with Elliot: "Is it not hard and tyrannical in you, more hard and tyrannical than any act of the Stuarts, not to allow me to publish my *Dialogues*? Pray, do you not think that a proper dedication may atone for what is exceptionable in them?"[11] It may have been then that Hume wrote his conciliatory opening letter.[12] For we read in it, further, how obvious and certain the Being of a God is—a truth acknowledged in all ages, the basis of all human hopes, of morality and society, a truth which it would be well to reflect upon every moment of our lives. This is well calculated to recommend the book. But we are also warned that the truth is hard to understand. Doubtful points about the particular Nature of a God arise: "Concerning these, human reason has not reached any certain determination: but these are topics so interesting, that we cannot restrain our restless enquiry with regard to them; though nothing but doubt, uncertainty and contradiction, have, as yet,

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 332. "Pamphilus" figures in *De Natura Deorum* as "a certain disciple of Plato."—Art. 26.
[10] Hill (Letter to Adam Smith, Aug. 15, 1776), p. 364.
[11] Burton, Vol. II, pp. 146-7.
[12] There is a similar preface in Cicero and in Berkeley's *Alciphron*.

been the result of our most accurate researches." The justification for such a book of discussion is its implicit testimony to a natural religion in the very search for its meaning.

Two motives inspire this argument about the nature of Deity. One is our human interest. We cannot restrain our inquiry about *what* God is, even though we meet with results unsatisfactory to us. We feel a necessity to believe something on this subject. But we also encounter in ourselves another kind of necessity. Whatever we believe must be consistent with itself, or with our other beliefs, so as to stand undoubted and certain. If we find no such stable position, we ought to hold aloof from all commitments. And this is the truly sceptical attitude, in conflict here with the initial attitude of dogmatism.

These two ways of reacting to religious fact Hume has portrayed in Cleanthes and Philo. Both characters express his own thinking. Both are, in the end, "philosophical." And Hume is so anxious to make us see that both belong to himself that he abandons the literary disguise of "Pamphilus," in the very last pages of the book, and speaks for himself, straight to the reader: "It seems evident, that the dispute between the Sceptics and Dogmatists is entirely verbal, or at least regards only the degrees of doubt and assurance, which we ought to indulge with regard to all reasoning: and such disputes are commonly, at the bottom, verbal, and admit not of any precise determination. No philosophical Dogmatist denies, that there are difficulties both with regard to the senses and to all science; and that these difficulties are in a regular, logical method, absolutely insolvable. No Sceptic denies, that we lie under an absolute necessity, notwithstanding these difficulties, of thinking, and believing, and reasoning with regard to all kind of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security. The only difference, then, between these sects, if they merit that name, is, that the Sceptic,

from habit, caprice, or inclination, insists most on the difficulties; the Dogmatist, for like reasons, on the necessity."[13]

It is little wonder, then, that we should be tempted to identify Hume with the dogmatist at one time and the sceptic at another, as if one of them must be the "hero."[14] Both represent ultimately valid ways of looking at the matter. When we are critically minded we insist upon the logical or formal difficulties in any position. We continue, nevertheless, to think and believe something, obeying the interests of our nature. These phases of his own mind Hume depicted in the characters of Philo and Cleanthes and in their dispute over religion.

The First Part introduces the various personalities in their typical attitudes. Cleanthes is host. In his study are two friends, Demea and Philo. His ward Pamphilus just then enters the room. Thereupon Demea takes occasion to speak well of the manner in which the young man has been educated, saying that it is an example of the good Stoic maxim of beginning with logic, ethics, and natural science,—all before religion. Piety should always be in-

[13] *Treatise*, Vol. II, p. 459 n. (*Dialogues*). For observations on this see A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*, Oxford, 1917, p. 15; A. Espinas, "La Philosophie en Écosse, *Rev. Phil.*, 1881, Vol. XII, p. 138; G. Compayré, *La Philosophie de David Hume*, Paris, 1873, pp. 318 *ff.*; H. Hasse, *Das Problem der Gültigkeit in der Philosophie D. Humes*, Munich, 1920, pp. 174-5; O. Quast, *Der Begriff des Belief bei D. Hume*, Halle, 1903, pp. 118 *ff.*; R. Richter, *Skeptizismus in der Philosophie*, Vol. II, pp. 334-5.

[14] Thus some writers have favored Cleanthes: Dugald Stewart, (*Dissertation, Works*, Vol. I, note ccc, p. 605); A. C. Fraser, (*Philosophy of Theism, First Series*, W. Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1895, pp. 209, 215-8, 240); B. McEwen (*Hume's Dialogues*, etc., Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1907, *Intr.*, p. xxxix). For Philo are: F. Paulsen (*Dialoge*, etc., tr. 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1905, pp. 19 *f.*); L. Stephen, (*English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 3rd ed., Putnam, 1902, Vol. I, pp. 317 *f*). Some consider Hume as being entirely non-committal: H. Höffding (*History of Modern Philosophy*, tr. Macmillan, London, 1900, Vol. I, p. 438); R. Falckenburg (same title, Holt, New York, 1897, p. 230); W. Windelband (same title, Macmillan, New York, 1901, pp. 494 *ff*).

stilled, but not theology until men have a thorough conviction of the utter futility of mere human reason in profane matters, for they can only then appreciate the meaning of a faith in the divine. This seems admirable to Philo. He goes further. Our human reason is weak, blind, and very limited in its competence, bringing uncertainty and contradiction in every subject, even the most common things, which are never rightly revealed to us through our senses, and it can establish no first principles with regard to matter, cause and effect, extension, space, time, and motion, and everything, in short, that is quantitative in nature. It is precisely in the physical world that we usually suppose we can achieve certainty and proof; but reflections upon the principles of human knowledge cast doubt on this great pretence of reason. And, after such instruction, we should scarcely pay much heed to reasonings about points so elevated and abstruse and remote from our familiar experience as divinity. There can be no certainty in our labored views of the origin of worlds and of their history from eternity to eternity.

Now Pamphilus observes both Demea and Cleanthes smiling at these remarks. Demea seems complacent over them. But Cleanthes is canny. He is more intimate with his sceptical friend. He catches sight of a certain concealed malice in those words. And so he asks whether the sceptic actually proposes to build a religious faith upon such foundations of doubt—as if certainty could be chased from every mundane subject of human knowledge and discovered, at last, in theology, with a higher authority than anywhere else in our experience. He taunts Philo about his scepticism. For all that fine doubting Philo must still believe in the law of gravitation, since he will depart from the room by the stairway rather than by the window. His scepticism is a sort of bravado like the heroism of the Stoics. It is doctrinaire, not practical. As a man, he thinks and believes like the rest of us.

These necessities of practical life Philo readily admits.[15] No reason can be given for them and none need be given. It is enough to find that we cannot get along in the world without taking certain facts to be established by experience. On the other hand, speculative thinking is not so inane as the practical mind fancies. Even though a Stoic sets up an ideal which it is hard to realise in any single action, he is influenced by that thought in the whole tenor of his conduct. So, too, with those general sceptical considerations. They persist in our minds whilst we are dealing with affairs. And this efficacy of philosophical thought is due to its being a "regular and methodical" procedure of forming more and more general views. It is natural and necessary. We should look, then, for "greater stability, if not greater truth, from our philosophy, on account of its exacter and more scrupulous method of procedure."

A sceptical way of thinking cannot affect our conclusions about matters of trade, morals, or aesthetic criticism, so much as theology. We refer at every moment to "common sense and experience" in forming opinions about ordinary matters. Our habit of testing everything is offset by the plain dictates of active life. But when we come to think about the Deity, we recognise at once that the objects are somewhat beyond us and that our usual methods of reasoning are now inappropriate. At best we "are entirely guided by a kind of instinct or necessity in employing them." Here we lack "the more solid and more natural arguments, derived from the senses and experience." Reason loses itself in the various possibilities. It offers as many arguments against any decision as for it. And the outcome is not a conclusion but a balance between divers views, a suspense of judgment. This is precisely the triumph of scepticism.

[15] Cf. Montaigne, *Apologie*: "Quant aux actions de la vie, ils [les sceptiques] sont en cela de la commune façon: ils se prestent et accomodent aux inclinations naturelles, à l'impulsion et contraincte des passions, aux constitutions des loix et des coustumes, et à la tradition des arts."

The malice of Philo is now clear. Religion is not founded on scepticism but disappears into it. Everywhere else, in matters of art, literature, politics, economics, and morals we may rightly trust our human understanding; only here, in theology, we first commence to falter and suspect ourselves. Other judgments hold good, but those about divinity are doubtful. Speculation only plays harmlessly about the facts of common life but attaints, most grievously, the beliefs of men in a God. Beliefs hold their ground in so far as they get verified through the senses and experience, and they have no other logic than their consistency or stability, which vanishes when we consider any realities beyond nature. Thus, instead of a special and very wonderful evidence attaching to the objects of theology, there is simply none at all. This is what Philo means.

Now we get an example of what Pamphilus has called "the accurate philosophical turn of Cleanthes," in contrast with "the careless scepticism of Philo." It is not the nature of the objects which renders them certain or doubtful to us but rather the evidence for them from our experience. The sceptics themselves always follow any kind of evidence no matter on what subject. They would not withhold their assent to the explanation Newton has given of the rainbow because it resolves light so minutely as to take it beyond human comprehension. Nor would they object, on general grounds, to the reasoning of Copernicus and Galileo with regard to the motion of the earth, that such an operation is too remote and magnificent for the human intellect. Philo means to be a "refined and philosophical sceptic." He seems to accept natural science. He is inquiring and discriminating, anxious to proportion his intellectual assent to the degree of evidence he finds for any particular matter. He acknowledges that the most abstruse and remote objects are precisely those which scientific thought has rendered intelligible to us, such as the nature of light and the system of the heavenly bodies. It is, rather, what is familiar in experience that eludes our

science,—the nourishment of living bodies by food and the cohesion of the parts of matter. Hence we cannot tell in advance whether we should believe or doubt any particular matter of fact, but must always consider the specific evidence in the case. This empirical method the reasonable sceptics pursue in all their studies of nature, mathematics, morals, and politics. They ought to be equally careful when they deal with the subject of theology and religion. Before declaring it beyond human reason they are bound, by their own habitual procedure as philosophers, to take the evidence seriously and consider its meaning. This is surely Philo's present obligation.

Cleanthes is not disposed to countenance any jesting in these matters. And he is clear in his own mind about the status of theology among the sciences. It is not marked off from the rest by either a special kind of evidence like revelation or no evidence at all. In so far as there is any ground for belief in the realities of religion, it is not a whit different in kind and weight from the evidence which induces us to believe in the objects of natural science. Indeed, if we may argue from the fact just observed, that human reason seems better able to explain the remote and abstruse and paradoxical, as in the Copernican system of the world, we are justified in claiming a reality for God like that of matter and our own being, realities which are so familiar and present with us as to need no argument to establish their truth. Our reasoning about religion seems only necessary to break down the "artificial obstacles" like those which Copernicus found erected against the truth in his day.

At this point Cleanthes shows something of the characteristic "habit, caprice, or inclination" of his mind. He observes how frequently, in the history of Christianity, theologians have professed a philosophical scepticism in order to uphold the faith.[16] It was so among the early Church Fathers and at the Reformation. Only of late has a philosopher come forward on behalf of *The Reasonableness*

[16] Cf. Bayle, *Éclaircissements, Observation générale*, art. 4.

of Christianity. Locke is the first to make faith a kind of reason, arising from arguments as do our other beliefs, in regard to physics, politics, and morals. To be a sceptic, then, is practically the same, according to this newer way of thinking, as to be an atheist.

Philo disclaims atheism. He is reminded of the wisdom of Francis Bacon. It is not that of the oft-quoted saying that a little philosophy makes a man an atheist while a great deal converts him to religion. He is thinking of the remark, that there is a worse kind of fool than David's fool who said in his heart there was no God—namely, he who not only believes it but speaks it publicly. Few who talk that way are really in earnest. But Philo still holds to his own scepticism as something quite distinct from such folly as the positive denial of God's existence. He is only suspicious of *theology*. And what Cleanthes has just noted seems to justify his discreet aloofness, for it seems that the philosophical defenders of religion change their tune with the times and have only one thing constantly in view, the maintenance of their own ecclesiastical authority. When reason is out of fashion, they exalt mystery; when it comes in again, they profess that we have nowadays no other principle to lead us to religion. Theologians seem to have political ends: their primary interest is not in truth. Philo cries: Priestcraft!

Cleanthes quietly avers that it is nothing unusual for men to represent their abiding convictions, on any matter, in terms that will appeal to the consciousness of the age. This is not the work of crafty priests but of human nature. And it is all the more to the credit of a set of philosophical principles if they have a useful tendency to confirm men in true religion and to throw confusion into the ranks of those who cavil and make light of this deep and genuine concern.

This dialogue is reminiscent of Berkeley's *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher* (where the persons of the drama likewise commence with some remarks upon the educa-

tion of children in religion): "Nothing, I say, is more natural, than to make the things we know a step towards those we do not know; and to explain and represent things less familiar by others which are more so."[17] We read, too, that "not to inquire in a point of so great concern is folly, but it is still a higher degree of folly to condemn without inquiring."[18] Berkeley wants the same impartial consideration of this subject-matter that we give to all matter of fact in our experience.[19] The free-thinkers and sceptics are but jesters and ralliers who do not think carefully or freely or without prejudice.[20]

"Cleanthes," the follower of Locke, is thus Hume's portrait of Bishop Berkeley. Probably each of the characters in the *Dialogues* represents some typical mind among the modern writers. It had been Berkeley's own device to exhibit his contemporaries, Collins and Shaftesbury, in the guise of the "minute philosophers." Hume did not go so far as that—his figures are more historical. "Philo" seems to be a Francis Bacon, empirically-minded in science but sceptical toward reasoned knowledge in religion.[21] "Demea" speaks in the manner of the French thinkers, Pierre Bayle, the sceptic, and the mystical Malebranche.[22] These are the men who had most influence upon Hume in his early youth, along with Berkeley and Cicero. Of course he drew from many and diverse books—Newton's *Principia*, Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, John Toland's *Letters to Serena* (and, probably, *Pantheisticon*), Butler's *Analogy*, Montaigne's *Essays*, especially the *Apology for Raimond Sébonde*, Samuel Clarke's *Demonstration*, Leibnitz's *Letters* to Clarke, and Fénelon's *Treatise on the Existence and Attributes of God*. However, three main types seem to have defined themselves in his mind, just as

[17] *Works, Alciphron, Dial.*, 1, secs. 5-6, and *Dial.* 7, sec. 13.
[18] *Dial.* 7, sec. 25.
[19] *Dial.* 6, sec. 28.
[20] *Dial.* 4, sec. 13.
[21] See above, pp. 40 *f.*
[22] See above, pp. 49 *ff.*

he arrived at several distinctive ethical types portrayed in his essays on *The Stoic*, *The Epicurean*, *The Platonist*, and *The Sceptic*. And in giving form to these ways of religious thinking he borrowed from the individual writers who had early sent him on his own career, Cicero, Bayle, Bacon, Malebranche, and especially Berkeley. It is not without significance, moreover, that "Pamphilus," presumably himself, is not the blood-relation of "Cleanthes" but the ward, a pupil and dependent, of the older man. When Hume allowed himself to make Cleanthes the "hero" of the dialogue he was paying his honest respects to that philosopher who stood nearest to himself in time and who was still alive in the year 1751.

The argument opens on the ground marked out by Berkeley. His Alciphron threw out certain proofs from the very beginning, all the "metaphysical arguments" of the Cartesians, which puzzle but never convince people, and all arguments from authority and utility. He wanted the kind of proof that every person of common sense requires in the case of any matter of fact. He agreed to waive all objections to the reality of a God from the seeming irregularity of nature and the evils of human life.[23] This indicated the position of Berkeley: the order of nature proves the Being and the Nature of God as a Providence. And it is this argument which Cleanthes now proposes.

Demea first attempts to assert that the Being of God is unmistakably known, whilst his Nature is absolutely incomprehensible. He appeals to the authority of Malebranche. And Philo seems to agree with him. There must be a cause for everything, and the original cause of the universe, whatever it is, we call God—which is sufficient,

[23] *Dial.* 4, secs. 2-3. Cf. Bayle, *Éclaircissement sur les Manichées* (the best argument against Manicheans is reality of order), and note 88; Clarke, *A Demonstration*, art. 8, pp. 47-8; Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, end, pp. 303 *f.* The observation about being puzzled and not convinced is taken from Cicero's *De Finibus* (Book IV, chap. III, end, Loeb Classics p. 309) from which Berkeley took his sub-title, *The Minute Philosopher*. Hume retorted it upon Berkeley in the *Enquiry*, p. 127 n.

certainly, to prove his Being, which we may then glorify with all the attributes of perfection. But this is provokingly ambiguous. It had been noticed by other writers that all atheists resort to the First Cause as something eternal, infinite, necessary, and all-powerful, but that they do not mean by that Cause a God the Providence, or a Moral Being.[24] Such Being is too nondescript. It is the emptiest of all notions, the mere last term in a chain of causes. So we really know nothing at all about God. This is what Philo now insinuates. We have experience of causes and effects and we properly conceive the existence of beings on the strength of that experience but we cannot know any Cause wholly beyond it. This arouses Cleanthes. He brushes aside the ontological and cosmological arguments, as well as the disguising "pious declamations" of his friend Philo, and states an argument from experience which is the only possible ground for a belief in theism.

The world as a whole and in all its parts is one great mechanism containing lesser systems within it infinite in number. There is an admirable working together of all the parts within each whole. They conspire toward the production of certain ends. They resemble the works of man himself, which proceed from his taking thought and planning how to use things for his purposes. By the resemblance of the effects of our intelligence to the things taking place in the universe at large we are induced to conceive of the author of nature as similar in Being to our own mind, though proportionately greater in all respects. This argument from design is *a posteriori*. It is the only proof establishing the intelligent character of God, as well as his Being.[25]

When Demea is amazed that there should be no *a priori* demonstrations of the Being of God pure and simple, his pretended ally, Philo, deserts him. For he has no intention

[24] Cf. S. Clarke, *A Demonstration*, etc., London, 1725, art. 12, pp. 111-2; and *A Discourse*, p. 12; Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres*, The Hague, 1727, Vol. III, pp. 213-4.

[25] Cf. Berkeley, *op. cit.*, *Dial.* 4, sec. 22.

of standing by any of those abstract reasonings. He is interested in that claim to a *proof* from experience. That there is an "inferior kind" of reasoning which establishes the existence of facts by experience of events in the past he is willing to allow—but he has scruples about such arguments in religion, for they do not seem as certain and sound as their kind permits. They fall short of the standard of such empirical knowledge. And this is seen the moment we reflect upon the case. We perceive a house, and immediately think of its architect or builder because we are familiar with that kind of effect proceeding from this sort of cause. But a universe and a house are so dissimilar that we may well hesitate to conclude that an architect of nature exists. The analogy is too weak. Our inference is, at best, a presumptuous guess—never a proof.

Cleanthes will not have it rated as such mere conjecture. The disparity between the natural phenomena and our human devices is not so great as we might think. In man's own legs we see a contrivance of nature for the mounting of stairs, not unlike the very stairs themselves which we fabricate for that purpose. Of course, some difference is there. But it does not warrant us in treating the inference of a designer so lightly.

At this a diversion is created by Demea who becomes angered over the vulgar comparisons introduced by their host in such a matter and who fears for the piety of the young Pamphilus listening to them. Philo placates him. He professes to be arguing with Cleanthes on his own ground only in order to show him the absurdity and danger of such tenets. And he describes the situation over again, careful to suggest a problem lurking in it. If we ignore what experience has taught us of the actual course of events, we easily lose ourselves in a world of fancy. Anything may cause anything else, apart from the specific conjunctions of things in the events of our experience. Nothing is false so long as it is conceivable. So it is quite impossible to fix upon any one kind of thing as the cause

of any particular event or of our universe. Now *a priori*, matter may contain in itself the principles of that order which exhibits itself everywhere in nature. It is always possible for elements to form themselves into "the most exquisite arrangement," from some unknown internal tendency within them. But experience shows us mind as the distinctive source of all design. There is no watch or house without a human maker who puts together the inert pieces of material composing these devices. And it is rather to mind itself, then, that we must ascribe "an unknown, inexplicable economy," whereby ideas arrange themselves to form a definite plan. Order is to be identified with the nature of mind. Consequently we infer, from such experience, the existence of something like a human mind to account for the observed order in Nature.

Philo opens another great possibility. It is reasonable, *a priori*, to conceive nature to be self-ordering and self-sufficient instead of being directed by a mind. Matter may contain an inherent, purposive tendency. This is the hypothesis of naturalism. But it seems that our experience decides for the religious hypothesis because of our distinction between mind and body, according to which mind alone is active and matter is simply inert. If nature is an ordered system, we cannot escape the conclusion that a Being exists similar to the mind of man. This argument Philo means to scrutinise. The implications of it are such as "no sound theist could endure." It degrades God. And by refuting it he will defend "the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature," which Demea maintains.[26]

Philo has his eye upon the method of reasoning in this argument. He will not dispute the right to draw causal inferences from experience. Similar effects prove similar causes, and *vice versa*. Proof is possible in terms of causes and effects.[27] But good reasoners proceed with very great

[26] Cf. Shaftesbury, *Moralists*, Part II, sec. 5, and *An Enquiry*, etc., Part I, art. 2.

[27] See above, pp. 193, 283 *f.* Cf. Newton's *Principia*, Book III, *System of the World, Rules of Reasoning*, p. 160.

caution in carrying their experience over to a new case. They look to see whether the situations are "exactly similar." Every difference between the past and present cases is of weight, no matter how much resemblance is observed. For the point of dissimilarity may itself be of more importance. To eliminate it as the essential factor in the new instance we must always make new experiments with regard to it. This is the true method of science.

In the present argument the Universe as a whole is compared with the handiwork of man, and its cause is likened to the mind of man. But when we consider the universe with all its variety, we see many more factors than the particular one we have here chosen to account for its operations. "Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observation." Thought is that principle by which some parts of nature change other parts. This known cause working within a world that contains other causes simultaneously active is supposed to have originated the whole system of the world itself, in isolation from those other factors. Can we thus transfer a conclusion from a known part to the Whole of which it is a part? Should not the extraordinary difference between these situations make us pause before we infer the existence of a universal Mind?[28]

Granting the propriety, even, of conceiving the origin of all Nature in terms of the working of some one part within nature, we still have this question: "What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe?"[29] Our choice of this human type of causation seems mere partiality.

[28] Cf. Buffon, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1858. *Theorie de la Terre, Premier Discours, De la Manière d'Étudier et de Traiter l'Histoire Naturelle*, pp. 48*f*.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

What happens in some one part of the world ought not to be made the rule for others, especially when they are "very remote" from each other. We have no good reason as yet, to attribute intelligence to beings on any other planet than this earth which we inhabit. "Nature has so extremely diversified her manner of operation in this small globe; can we imagine, that she incessantly copies herself throughout so immense a universe?" And if human reason dwells only on earth, with so limited a sphere of influence even here, we should be rash, indeed, to make it the universal cause of all things. The peasant who fancies the government of a kingdom as something like his own household regimen is far less presumptuous.

Time is real, as well as space. Though we should allow an intelligence like human reason to be possible everywhere in the world and vastly more competent in its universal activity than we know it in our limited sphere, still we could not see "why the operations of a world, constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world, which is in its embryo-state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. . . . Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine."[30]

Here, then, are the challenging aspects of our argument. "A very small part of this great system, during a very short time, is very imperfectly discovered to us: and do we then pronounce decisively concerning the origin of the whole? Admirable conclusion! Stone, wood, brick, iron, brass,

[30] Cf. Buffon, *op. cit.*, *Second Discours, Des Époques de la Nature*, pp. 379 *f.* The idea of a growth or development of the world had interested Hume for some time. See the opening of *Essay, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* (1751), and *Of Civil Liberty*, and last paragraph of *The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth.*

have not, at this time, in this minute globe of earth, an order or arrangement without human art and contrivance: therefore the universe could not originally attain its order and arrangement, without something similar to human art. But is a part of nature a rule for another part very wide of the former? Is it a rule for the whole? Is a very small part a rule for the universe? Is nature in one situation, a certain rule for nature in another situation, vastly different from the former?"

Philo prefers, to any decision, the non-committal attitude of old Simonides, of whom Cicero has told that he put off indefinitely pronouncing what God was—we simply do not know God. For the sceptic sees that he cannot have such knowledge, because of the very conditions of the situation.[31] "When two *species* of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by custom, the existence of one wherever I *see* the existence of the other: and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art, like the human; because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite, that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance."[32] Philo stops short here, seeing Cleanthes very impatient to make a rejoinder.

And Pamphilus notes for our benefit that Philo has been proceeding with vehemence, half in earnest, half in jest. He has been carried away by his imagination. He is reckless, even in his scepticism. He has disclosed the assumption underlying the theistic argument that matter and

[31] Cf. Shaftesbury, *Moralists, Atheistical Hypothesis*, Part II, sec. 4.
[32] This formulation of the argument from experience is made by the author himself in the conclusion to the essay *Of a Particular Providence and a Future State*; see above, p. 301.

mind are absolutely distinct from each other, matter being totally inert, mind alone being active. He has noticed, in a genuinely empirical spirit, that other activities coexist with thought in our world. Following natural science, he shows how much our thinking really depends upon material factors operating in space and time. And lastly, he attempts to define the method of science, or a true knowledge of fact, and he reveals that it cannot be applied to a situation in which the universe is treated as an *item* of experience like the parts within it. These observations constitute real "difficulties" which Hume himself privately admitted to Elliot to be logically insoluble. He says the same thing in his footnote, in the concluding Part of the *Dialogues*, throwing off the disguise of "Pamphilus." We cannot assert, therefore, that our idea of Mind as the cause of all nature is a logical necessity of reason. We must acknowledge the littleness of mind within the vastness of nature. It is connected with a little agitation of a physical brain in a mere animal living upon a minor planet. We know little about it even in its proper habitat. We do know, however, the immensity of all nature, and its unimaginable extension in time. The possibilities in the universe are great. Novelty may be real. And in the face of this thought we wisely recognise the need for a most scrupulous caution before we round out our world with a Mind. But Philo himself has been too careless. He has definitely affirmed that the subject-matter is plainly seen to be beyond experience. He talks as if seeing with the eyes were the whole purport of experience. All his language is in the metaphor of visual perception—the "very small part," the "very remote," the "vast." And his requirement that we must see worlds originate before we may infer an origin for the whole universe proceeds from an assumption that visual magnitudes serve as the only ground for intellectual comparison and knowledge. This rules out all objects of religion as possible objects of the human understanding. Philo is not quite restrained in doing this—the

true rôle of the sceptic is to define the empirical *method* rather than the objects of experience.[33]

This is the point of Cleanthes' reply. He considers it an abuse of terms to reduce all reasoning from experience to literal thinking about our sense experience. The ordinary man distinguishes "reason" from "experience" in the narrow sense that Philo has used it. And even if reason is found to be nothing but a kind of experience, it is a genuinely distinctive process of mind. There is nothing contrary to common sense, then, in saying that we may "prove by experience the origin of the universe from mind." In fact, we can only prove the motion of the earth itself by a like process. A person disposed to cavil might very easily silence a Copernicus with the same objections here urged against the religious hypothesis. He would call for visible evidence of other earths moving before he would accept a conclusion regarding this earth.[34]

At this Philo vindicates himself. Hume is now improving upon his first model for his "sceptic." It was Francis Bacon, the publisher of the "experimental method," who had relied too much upon the senses and thus failed to grasp the significance of the new ventures in knowledge made by Copernicus. He had not fully appreciated the nature of scientific reasoning. He thus limited the purview of science, even whilst talking about its infinite progress beyond present knowledge. But Hume has read Galileo's dialogues on *The Two Great Systems of the World* and he discerns the importance of hypothesis in all knowledge.[35] There is always an advance upon experience, a revolution in habits of thought, wherever there is an "ad-

[33] Cf. S. Alexander, *Space, Time, and Deity* (p. 4), with regard to the difference between empirical method and the subject-matter of experience.
[34] Cf. Berkeley, *Dialogues*, Vol. I, p. 456.
[35] Cf. Ch. de Remusat (*Bacon, sa Vie, son Temps, et de son Influence jusqu'à nos Jours*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1858, p. 396), who gives Hume credit for being the first English writer to appreciate Galileo as superior to Bacon. Hume acquired Italian during those early days prior to his planning of the *Treatise*, presumably reading Galileo, although he might also have done this in the Latin. See above, p. 22.

vancement of learning" such as Bacon heralded for the future but could not recognise in the living flesh. So the careful sceptic will have to measure the argument for the religious hypothesis concerning the Whole against the reasoning that establishes the Copernican hypothesis for the visible, stellar universe.

"Yes . . . we have other earths. Is not the moon another earth, which we see to turn round its centre? Is not Venus another earth, where we observe the same phenomenon? Are not the revolutions of the sun also a confirmation, from analogy, of the same theory? All the planets, are they not earths, which revolve about the sun? Are not the satellites moons, which move round Jupiter and Saturn, and along with these primary planets, round the sun? These analogies and resemblances, with others, which I have not mentioned, are the sole proofs of the Copernican system: and to you it belongs to consider, whether you have any analogies of the same kind to support your theory."

It is significant, too, that the genius of Galileo had to employ itself not only in the organisation of this evidence but also in breaking down a hard and fast distinction commonly accepted by people, to the effect that all substances were either elementary or celestial, the latter having assigned to them all the qualities which contrast with those of the changeable, destructible objects of our experience. Galileo, "beginning with the moon, proved its similarity in every particular to the earth; its convex figure, its natural darkness when not illuminated, its density, its distinction into solid and liquid, the variations of its phases, the mutual illuminations of the earth and moon, their mutual eclipses, the inequalities of the lunar surface, etc. After many instances of this kind, with regard to all the planets, men plainly saw, that these bodies became proper objects of experience; and that the similarity of their nature enabled us to extend the same arguments and phenomena from one to the other."

Here is a model of empirical reasoning. It exhibits a superlative caution. It guards against the illusions of popular misconception. It shows ground for that similarity between the planets from which we argue the revolution of the earth about its axis and the sun. Is there any such body of analogies to justify our present conclusion that a Mind is the source of our whole universe? If there is, then "cite your experience, and deliver your theory." Until Cleanthes measures up to this ideal he cannot pretend to have a proof of the reality of God as an Intelligence. And without such proof the whole matter is inconclusive.

It was in Part Three that Hume found himself taxed to the limit of his powers to express the validity of the dogmatist's claim to a rational conclusion. "I could wish Cleanthes' argument could be so analyzed, as to be rendered quite formal and regular. The propensity of the mind towards it,—unless that propensity were as strong and universal as that to believe in our senses and experience, —will still, I am afraid, be esteemed a suspicious foundation. 'Tis here I wish for your assistance; we must endeavour to prove that this propensity is somewhat different from our inclination to find our own figures in the clouds, our faces in the moon, our passions and sentiments even in inanimate matter. Such an inclination may, and ought to be controlled, and can never be a legitimate ground of assent. The instances I have chosen for Cleanthes are, I hope, tolerably happy, and the confusion in which I represent the sceptic seems natural, but—*si quid novisti rectius*, etc. . . . P.S.—If you'll be persuaded to assist me with Cleanthes, I fancy you need not take matters any higher than part third."[36]

Here it is we find those "reasonings of too nice and delicate a nature" which Hume was not prepared to offer at the time he wrote his essay on natural religion in the *Enquiry*. There he had reached a satisfactory formulation

[36] Burton, Vol. I, pp. 333, 336.

of the sceptical claim. The point of a philosophical dogmatism, however, he could merely suggest, "without insisting on it." But in the *Dialogues* he must represent it in such wise as to bring us to the same conviction—the rôle of Cleanthes is to *insist* upon the "necessity of thinking, and believing, and reasoning" to some conclusion on this subject. It is the kind of necessity we identify with a natural "propensity." But to justify it we must distinguish our religious conception of nature from the fanciful personifications to which mankind is so prone. There must be a certain law in our thought. Only so will it be reasonable. And the hardest problem is to show such reason in it, when we must acknowledge that our religious belief itself is not so strong and general in mankind as our common beliefs with regard to matters of fact and experience.

Hume had started his career with the discovery that inference has no foundation whatsoever in reason, taking reason to be the demonstration of truth by the law of logical contradiction. Inference ought not to take place, if man is strictly rational. But it does, nevertheless, occur. On the strength of the similarity of events we argue from some present fact to new events. The drawing of this advantage from our experience we must attribute to the imagination. And yet Hume sought, at once, to show that this imagination has its own peculiar principles, everywhere holding, in the formation of beliefs, or sentiments, or any other type of complex perception. When he came to rewrite his first book he gradually softened the sharp lines of his original distinction between such regular imagination and the ideal and perfect reason. This is especially noticeable in his study of morals, where the *Enquiry* designates any form of reflection, as well as causal inference, "reasoning." Moreover, the important thing about any knowledge, whether it be concerning fact or moral worth, is its process by rule or law, not the peculiar faculty in which it has its origin. Thus, though right and wrong, or good and bad, are based upon the "sentiment" of humanity, as

well as upon reflective thought, they are still real and valid for all persons, according to their circumstances. It appears, then, that Hume tended to include in the term "reason" what he originally called "imagination." The distinctions are now between the sheerly impulsive, or instinctive movements of thought, and the methodical ones. Common sense is the direct form of thinking; empirical science and moral conscience are its forms in so far as man is aware of some general rules according to which, as Hume expresses it, he ought to "control" his inclinations.

Besides taking this larger view of reason, Hume seems to have been increasingly alive to the reality, and even the mystery of human personality. Despite his inability to show any warrant for our idea of a person he had continued to employ it, and had even emphasised it, in his later studies of sentiment and morality. In this he was confirmed by the philosophies of Berkeley and Butler. It was probably this feature in Berkeley's *Apology* for religion that made of Hume the qualified disciple we seem to see depicted in the filial relationship of "Pamphilus" to "Cleanthes." One of the instances cited by Cleanthes in Part Three, which Hume hoped was "tolerably happy," is but a transcription of the doctrine proposed by Berkeley as something new in the argument for theism,—that Nature is itself a Visual Language conveying meaning to us exactly as one person does to another in face to face conversation. And this is the point of the dogmatist: all order in what is present with us irresistibly leads us to think of a personality like ourselves. This "inclination" of our thought, Hume said, is probably a dictate of "reason" itself.

What, then, is the reply of Cleanthes to the sceptic's demand that he must cite adequate analogies for the creation of all Nature by a Mind like the human? The citation is unnecessary. The situation in which we now find ourselves is intrinsically different from that of a scientist,

for Galileo had to "prove the similarity" of matter in the skies with that of our earth only because some people had foisted upon the minds of men a false distinction between these things. He was confronted with prejudice. And the prejudice was not that of the common man but of ingenious thinkers who had singled out some phase of the appearances of things and made it the important aspect, neglecting the very obvious resemblance between the heavenly bodies and the masses of body on earth.[37] It was in order to exorcise their perverted habit of thought and speech about nature that Galileo went about his methodical proof of the similarity of the earth to the planetary bodies, so that he might convince people generally of the nature of the earth as a globe moving on its axis and in its orbit about the sun. It always requires such technique to wean people from their accustomed ways of looking at things. The scientist must multiply instances of what he comprehends from his point of view. He must lead the mind to assimilate the matter in new ways. He must familiarise it with the truer aspect. And when he succeeds in bringing others to see eye to eye with himself, in respect to the whole set of relevant facts, he need do nothing more—man will naturally draw the proper conclusion. And belief inevitably follows. Thus scientific method is valuable in clearing the field for us to infer what is in accord with our human experience, or with any additional experiments made to enrich it. The procedure of science is essential only to the establishment of what is unnatural or unusual in our opinions about matters of fact. It corrects our prejudiced beliefs. It brings about a coherence and stability, which is equivalent, perhaps, to greater truth. But it depends, nevertheless, upon the primary operations of the human mind, the unguarded, spontaneous assimilations of things with our past experience and the inferences on the strength of them. It presupposes the common distinctions

[37] Cf. Bayle, *Oeuvres Diverses*, Vol. III, *Réponse aux Questions d'un Provincial*, chap. xcvi, p. 692.

and relations of daily life.[38] It is entirely without value when mankind *naturally* tends to take a certain point of view. Now this is exactly the case with respect to the order of nature or the universe: "It is by no means necessary, that theists should prove the similarity of the works of Nature to those of Art; because this similarity is self-evident and undeniable. The same matter, a like form: what more is requisite to show an analogy between their causes, and to ascertain the origin of all things from a divine purpose and intention?"

The order of things is everywhere in our experience. In the handiwork of man and in the phenomena of the heavens there is form and arrangement. Wherever we look, we think of the same thing: purpose. It is a general truth taken in at every turn. And now we are required by a sceptic to bring forward some analogies for the presence of a purpose when events take place regularly and uniformly. Obviously we cannot prove this conception, which we have everywhere suggested to us, by any new experience. We are in the predicament of those who are asked to prove that motion exists. It is a universal fact. We cannot go outside the universe to explain why the universe exhibits itself in the motion of bodies. We can only cite instances and illustrations of this inescapable fact which we must refer to in all our thinking about the physical world. So we can only reply to the critics of our present argument by producing other examples of a mode of reasoning which is natural to us all, the inference of a purposive nature from the evidence of an order of nature.

The illustrations can only be highly fanciful, like the myths in the dialogues of Plato. They are to convey the apprehension of truth that lies so close to us and so very present that we cannot envisage it in any external way, but only through imagination. Let us suppose a voice speaking to mankind in a language universally intelligible and valu-

[38] See above, pp. 134 *f.*

able for their lives. Our immediate thought would be: some one is there with intentions like our own. There would be plenty of difficulty, of course, for a sceptic to harp upon: this extraordinary voice in no particular dialect and with a carrying power and flexibility utterly unlike any human voice surely could not be the expression of any being like ourselves. The whole event might simply be "some accidental whistling of the winds." But despite such objections we should believe here in a divine purpose. This is Berkeley's point about the world of our knowledge, in *Alciphron*. The universe of our visual perception speaks just such a language, intelligible in every quarter, and regular, so that men can depend upon it, and make it serve their human ends to which it thus seems congenial. Simply living and moving about among things depends upon our making such sense of our world. We discern, therefore, a reason in it.[39]

But Philo has talked about the presence of other natural capacities in the world, besides human intelligence and reason. Even taking so complex a situation we can find an illustration to justify our view. Suppose, once again, "a natural, universal, invariable language" common to man. Let books be living beings, like animal creatures, propagating themselves and multiplying so as to fill the whole room of our universe. There is a certain meaning in both these suppositions. Creatures do express themselves naturally and are understood by each other, through the instinctive expressions of passion and feeling. Moreover, there is much less organisation involved in a book like the *Iliad* or *Aeneid* than in a living creature, so that we may easily fancy a natural production and reproduction of books.[40] Thus, having given in these books both the animate and the intelligible qualities of the things of our experience, we could not read such books without thinking

[39] *Alciphron, Dial.* 4, secs. 6-16, and *The Theory of Vision*, etc.
[40] The reference to the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* is found in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, and Fénelon, *Traité de l'Existence*, etc., p. 3.

of the origin of their being as something very like mind and intelligence. The facts of the *instinctive* communication of this language by the books and of the *natural* propagation of the books themselves from generation to generation would in no wise keep us from seeing a mind at the root of the matter. What the books *tell* us is the point: "Could you persist in asserting, that all this, at the bottom, had really no meaning, and that the first formation of this volume in the loins of its original parent proceeded not from thought and design?"

These have been, indeed, strange fancies. They are stranger than the fact. And the difference is all in favor of the universe as we really know it. We are more impressed by the meaning of Nature in her works than we are by the handicraft of man. "The anatomy of an animal affords many stronger instances of design than the perusal of Livy or Tacitus."[41] Yet if we cannot deny the inference to an intelligence in that supposed case of "our vegetating library," how much more valid must we allow it to be in the case of the real, organised universe?

The sceptical attitude in its proper form really strengthens the force of this religious argument. No "reasonable sceptic" professes to exclude reasoning absolutely —he cannot do so without being dogmatic. He shies away from the "abstruse, remote and refined arguments" and holds fast to "common sense and the plain instincts of nature." Where he is moved by any evidence he will believe like anyone else. Otherwise he would have to do violence to his own nature for the sake of reason, which it ill becomes him to do. "Now the arguments for natural religion are plainly of this kind; and nothing but the most perverse, obstinate metaphysics can reject them. Consider, anatomise the eye; survey its structure and contrivance; and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force

[41] Cf. *Alciphron, Dial.*, 4, sec. 5.

like that of sensation.[42] The most obvious conclusion surely is in favor of design." And it takes "time, reflection and study" to find the logical objections urged against believing such a conclusion. The natural conviction of one who looks upon male and female in the species with their structures, instincts, and activities throughout life is "that the propagation of the species is intended by Nature. Millions and millions of such instances present themselves through every part of the universe; and no language can convey a more intelligible, irresistible meaning, than the curious adjustment of final causes." It is blind dogmatism in a philosopher "to reject such natural and such convincing arguments."

Thus Cleanthes insists upon the necessity of believing in a Purpose and Intelligence in nature. Yet his defence is a tacit admission of Philo's point: natural theology is not accurate, methodical, reflective knowledge like natural science. The procedure of our thought in the inference of a God from the order of nature is not at all commensurate with the standard of reasoning exemplified in the proofs of Galileo and Copernicus for the physical facts about nature. Yet the inference is reasonable. It is a way of thinking altogether natural under the circumstances. And if we find it difficult to understand how we can speak of knowledge, in a case where a belief is so defective in logic and method, we must remember the phases of experience which are analogous to it. "Some beauties in writing we may meet with, which seem contrary to rules, and which gain the affections, and animate the imagination, in opposition to all the precepts of criticism, and to the authority of the established masters of art. And if the argument for theism be, as you pretend, contradictory to the principles of logic; its universal, its irresistible influence proves clearly, that there may be arguments of a like irregular nature. Whatever cavils may be urged; an orderly world, as well as a coherent, articulate speech, will still be received as an in-

[42] Cf. Fénelon, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-6.

contestable proof of design and intention." So purpose, like beauty, is an appreciation. Despite all strictures it holds our thought and interest.

The religious thought is universal wherever we find the conditions appropriate to it. We cannot refer, therefore, to the "consent of men" as proof for the necessity of believing in a God. Among savages it is likely that such a theism as we have considered never appears. This is due to their sheer stupidity. It is not because they have thought the matter out and rejected one distinct hypothesis for another. They do not even realise the fact that nature is an order, which is requisite to the theistic view. Their curiosity might extend a little way, perhaps to the source of an animal in its parents, and the source of the latter in their parents. Beyond that their minds would not venture, for they are content in their ignorance. They are neither dogmatic nor sceptical. Only when men have enough learning to appreciate the regularity of nature can they think of an intelligence and purpose in all things. And with that learning comes the very ingenuity that causes their doubts. They develop too luxuriant and fertile a fancy. It is that which animates a sceptic like Philo—"which suppresses your natural good sense, by a profusion of unnecessary scruples and objections."

At that criticism of himself Philo is "a little embarrassed and confounded,"—so Pamphilus tells us. And Hume mentioned the episode to Elliot, observing that "the confusion in which I represent the sceptic seems natural." He had just told his friend, moreover, of his own early troubles about this whole subject,—that "it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason." His scepticism sprang from imagination of possibilities other than the one prevalent among men. Hume could not check this imagination any more than he could withhold his natural inclination to believe. So he asked Elliot whether he knew anything better

on behalf of the religious position. The reply of his friend is apparently not preserved. But Hume, after rounding out his discussion of theism in Part Five, seems to have followed his own restless fancies to the limit and worked them out into the definitely alternative position of naturalism. Until that was accomplished he could not honestly represent the argument as a triumph for Cleanthes. And by the time it was done, about ten years later, he no longer talked of having any heroes in the piece.

Meantime it is sufficient to have this religious "argument" presented. The order of nature is intelligible to us. Every event can be understood in terms of some law. And not only is the universe reasonable, in that sense, but also in another important way: the organisation of living beings has meaning for us. The whole face of nature is open to us like a book, conveying such meaning and bespeaking a mind like our own. Inevitably we conceive of a God in the form of that purpose and mind everywhere manifest.

Now the question arises, put by Demea who saves Philo at this juncture, whether we can make so near an approach to the Deity as in this personal confrontation. "When I read a volume, I enter into the mind and intention of the author: I become him, in a manner, for the instant; and have an immediate feeling and conception of those ideas which revolved in his imagination while employed in that composition." But we cannot come so near to God through reading the volume of nature. His being and his ways are not our ways. He is, properly, incomprehensible. Even the Platonic school of philosophers who were most willing to allow the perfection of human intellect would not attribute it to God. We know, too (it is Malebranche who speaks here),[43] that "all the *sentiments* of the human mind, gratitude, resentment, love, friendship, approbation, blame,

[43] See above, pp. 52 *ff*. See Hume's letter to Hutcheson, March 16, 1740, Burton, Vol. I, pp. 119-20.

pity, emulation, envy, have a plain reference to the state and situation of man, and are calculated for preserving the existence, and promoting the activity of such a being in such circumstances." The senses are in a like pass, and our ideas drawn from them. The whole nature and the workings of our mind are clearly relative to our animal and earthly condition. It is surely impious, then, to invest God with attributes belonging to a creature subject to the vicissitudes of a life in time and space and movement, for God is the Creator of all things, perfect and infinite and utterly incomprehensible.

The question raised is an important one. Can we define God in terms of anything fairly intelligible to ourselves without taking away all the religious meaning? The opening of Part Four shows Cleanthes so provoked that he departs from his wonted philosophical calm and calls Demea an "atheist." For a divine Being who is utterly unintelligible and unknown is virtually non-being. The mystical God is no God at all. It has no specific qualities to mark off its reality from nothing.[44] And atheists are always willing to speak of a first cause of all things and to load on it all the eulogistic terms imaginable. Such mystics as Demea call this non-entity by the name of God, as if the name alone could give it a religious meaning.

But Demea reminds his friend of the very dangerous and heretical position to which his own theism tends. It is "anthropomorphism." The analogy of God with man is fatal to religion. The mind of man is a composite reality, a mass of passions, sentiments, and ideas, having, indeed, a certain unity in the person, but essentially variable and complex. Novelty is characteristic of human mind. But God *means* to us a being perfectly unchanging, perfectly simple, acting throughout all time and space, "entire in every point of space; and complete in every instant of duration," perfectly the same forever. God cannot be con-

[44] This is a retort to Malebranche in terms of his own principles. See the opening sentence of the *Entretiens Métaphysiques*.

ceived in the image of our mind and remain the God of religion.

However, Cleanthes stands by his position. People who have such ideas of God are atheists without knowing it. We must conceive of God definitely, or not at all. And if God is spoken of as an Intelligence or Mind, he must be conceived in terms of the only kind of mind we know: "A mind, whose acts and sentiments and ideas are not distinct and successive; one, that is wholly simple, and totally immutable; is a mind, which has no thought, no reason, no will, no sentiment, no love, no hatred; or in a word, is no mind at all." It is an abuse of terms to call such a thing "mind."

Philo has collected himself by this time and he interposes to lift the argument out of such theological recrimination into the calm of philosophy. He is now ready to exercise his judgment on this matter, rather than suspend it. He intends to prosecute the thought of Cleanthes to the very end and to show that it does not really establish the religious meaning of God but opens the way to scepticism. There are great "inconveniences," or embarrassments, in this argument to anthropomorphic theism.

Let a divine purpose be granted, so that the world is at bottom the expression of a scheme of thought in a mind. What shall we think when we contemplate this original cause? Reason may not be the source of our general inference to cause and effect, but reason certainly prescribes one thing,—impartiality in our judgments. If we are impelled to infer the existence of things causally, without any scrupulous examination of the extraordinary nature of our subject-matter, as Cleanthes has insisted, surely we ought to seek causes for everything, whatever it be. So, having launched upon a causal explanation, we are forced to continue it. What is the cause, then, of this universal Mind itself which is the cause of nature? And further, if the universe or order of mind is something like the order of the material world, its cause ought to be conceived by

analogy with material causes. Thus abstract reason leads us on beyond this original Mind; or rather, it only carries us back again to sheer matter.

We might also argue from experience on this subject, although it does seem to lie outside the realm of experience. We find a similarity between the worlds of mind and matter in their operations, in their variety of causes, and in their obedience to principles or laws. Two examples are close at hand. Our own mind and a vegetable and animal body. But as we scrutinise these two forms of reality, we discover that nothing can be more variable or dependent upon other things than human thought itself. It is never exactly the same in different people, or even in the same person at different times. Different conditions of age, health, weather, food, companionship, books, sentiments, and many other things make corresponding alterations in our thinking. Living creatures cannot show a greater complexity and dependence upon external circumstances than the human mind. We try, therefore, to account for its order by referring to material causes. Once again, we should have to ask whether a universal Thought would not have a material cause beyond itself like that with which we are so familiar in our knowledge of ourselves.

The "inconvenience" then is this: if we try to explain the order of nature by recourse to a Mind like our own, we are compelled both by logic and by facts to give an account of the Divine Ideas by reference to that material existence which makes the variations of mind in our own experience intelligible to us. We are carried on and on infinitely. Of course we might stop short in our career of explanation. But then we should need to justify this halt. It seems more reasonable not to set out at all upon a tracing of causes for all nature: "By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God; and the sooner we arrive at that divine Being, so much the better." The first step to anything beyond the universe begins a quest in which we shall never find any satisfaction.

It is sheer dogmatism to argue that the ideas in a divine mind might form themselves into an order without any known and distinctive cause beyond themselves and that this is simply the fact, familiar to us all. For, if this conception of things which organise themselves has any meaning at all, "I would fain know, why it is not as good sense to say, that the parts of the material world fall into order, of themselves, and by their own nature." This is equally intelligible. And it seems to be actually favored by our experience: "We have a much larger experience of matter, which does the same; as, in all instances of generation and vegetation, where the accurate analysis of the cause exceeds all human comprehension."[45] On the other hand, we are acquainted, too, with cases in which the human mind actually loses its systematic character, as in madness and mental degeneracy. We have little ground, then, for attributing order essentially, and uniquely, to mind. So we are compelled to look further for its ultimate source. We might as well recognise at once, therefore, that the order of the whole universe as it appears to us is precisely the limit of our knowledge. All attempts to pronounce something decisive about its cause are quite futile and unsatisfactory.

But Cleanthes refuses to be embarrassed by these difficulties. Our religious position is a simple inference like those of our common-sense belief. We must consider it in that light. It is quite the usual thing to assign a specific cause for some event without asking further what the cause of that cause may be and without holding our judgment back until we settle every remote question. We stop when we have satisfied the motive of our inquiry. And this body of ordinary inferences is surely some sort of knowledge. Otherwise we should not know anything at all, not even that nature to which Philo limits us. Now the religious argument is precisely of this common type. The order and arrangement of all things, and particularly

[45] Cf. *Alciphron, Dialogue* 3, sec. 10; *Dialogue* 6, sec. 14.

the purposiveness of living beings, bespeak an intelligent cause or design. This conclusion satisfies us. "You ask me, what is the cause of this cause? I know not; I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity; and here I stop my enquiry. Let those go farther, who are wiser or more enterprising."

But the difficulties make Philo quite unwilling to go even so far as that first inference to a mind. He cannot see that anything is gained by attributing the order to a universal Mind which must itself be rendered intelligible to us. We learn nothing from it, as we do from physical explanations in natural science. And our procedure is not comparable with that of science. "Naturalists indeed very justly explain particular effects by more general causes, though these general causes themselves should remain in the end totally inexplicable: but they never surely thought it satisfactory to explain a particular effect by a particular cause, which was no more to be accounted for than the effect itself.[46] An ideal system, arranged of itself, without a precedent design, is not a whit more explicable than a material one, which attains its order in a like manner; nor is there any more difficulty in the latter supposition than in the former."

Philo is not voicing scepticism here so much as naturalism. The simplicity of the latter view appeals to him. If order is such an ineluctable fact of our experience, we might well consider it intrinsic to all the various realities with which we are acquainted, matter as well as mind. When we attribute it to mind alone, we are compelled to take a further step because the mind itself is a problem, and we are carried by that next step to this very same position,—that matter is a source of the order of mind. This is the view that looms up, again and again, to the restless-minded philosopher. It was thoroughly worked out later in the *Dialogues*, in Parts Six to Eight. On the other hand, there are certain motives in Cleanthes' dogmatism. He

[46] Cf. Buffon, *op. cit.*, *Premier Discours*, p. 62.

stops short in his search for causes when he arrives at the conception of intelligence. Here he finds the complete satisfaction of his inquiry. The reason for this Hume had been investigating, in his *Natural History of Religion*, and he spoke his mind about it, finally, in Parts Ten to Twelve of the *Dialogues*. Thus the present Part Four is largely a preparation for the later ones. Still, it shows that the position of Cleanthes is far from satisfactory. This theism is not the outcome of strict reasoning, and the God it affirms seems nothing different from mere Nature.

There are still more untoward consequences in Cleanthes' anthropomorphic theism. Assuming the rule of like effects proving like causes, we ought to proportion our conception of the cause to the precise degree of resemblance which its effect bears to those of our experience. But if we conceive the Deity by analogy with the human mind and its workmanship, we cannot very well accept the new discoveries of nature, particularly the world of astronomy, for these phenomena go far beyond anything of human plan and make. Ancient writers like Lucretius and Cicero felt the force of this objection, though they were then living in comparative ignorance of the wonders of stellar space. They found it difficult to imagine the vast operations in terms of our familiar devices and instruments. Now the world we know makes such an origin almost inconceivable. And besides the grandeur and immensity of nature, we now see its minuteness and complexity, through the microscope. This removes the effect still further from anything of human production; and so, too, do the facts of life revealed by the sciences of anatomy, chemistry, and botany. But here Cleanthes interposes: it is precisely these phenomena in nature that disclose the instances of art and contrivance like the human.[47] We can assimilate them completely to our experience of our own activity, and we conceive their origin by analogy with our intelligence. This

[47] Cf. Clarke, *A Demonstration*, art. 9, p. 65.

is the real evidence for Deity. Now for the consequences, Philo cries, "with an air of alacrity and triumph."

God cannot be infinite. The effects from which we infer his Being are finite things like those that issue from our own activities—any cause of these effects must be only finite. Unless we think of the Deity as finite we cannot possibly prove his existence from such data. But worse still is in store for us. The world we know is not, to our own eyes, a perfect thing. Were we able to know God *a priori*, without recourse to our experience, we might reconcile this appearance of things with his perfection of Being by attributing an ignorance to ourselves; but we are actually supposed to glean this reality from what we know, so that God must be divested of all that we mean by the term "perfect," in the religious sense. And even granting that the universe is really a coherent and complete work, it might very properly, if we are arguing from human affairs, be attributed to the exertions of many workmen. We marvel sometimes at the genius of one who builds a ship. "And what surprise must we feel, when we find him a stupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations, and controversies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out: much labor lost: many fruitless trials made; and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making." This gives us no very exalted idea of the maker. And it suggests the possibility, in all the obscurity of this subject, that the Deity may not be One but Many. Just as a number of men, however foolish and stupid, will yet collaborate in the construction of a building or a city, so there may be demons working together in the universe. It is unwise ever to multiply causes when one is already sufficient, but when we do not know certainly whether the One Cause exists and must conceive our causes by analogy with human experi-

ence alone, we may rightly entertain this supposition of a polytheism. Then we naturally fall into the way of mythology. Why do not these many gods arise like human beings, by generation? Why are they not corporeal, exactly like ourselves in every detail? This is what our argument comes to,—if pursued with a strict regard for the analogy with human experience.[48] There is no reason, then, for believing in a spiritual God, or One God, or a Perfect and Infinite God. Such consequences ought surely to embarrass any true man of religion.

"In a word, Cleanthes, a man, who follows your hypothesis, is able, perhaps, to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from something like design: but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance, and is left afterwards to fix every point of his theology, by the utmost license of fancy and hypothesis." The outcome is "so wild and unsettled a system of theology" that none at all seems preferable.

Cleanthes disavows absolutely that God must be finite if we infer his Being from experience. Nor is he troubled by those impious consequences. For they are only presented in a "rambling way" by the sceptic. And one truth stands out, in the midst of these horrible suggestions: "By the utmost indulgence of your imagination, you never get rid of the hypothesis of design in the universe; but are obliged, at every turn, to have recourse to it. To this concession I adhere steadily; and this I regard as a sufficient foundation for religion."

Such is the conclusion to the Fifth Part, which must have been the end of that "sample" communicated to Elliot in 1751. Hume wrote concerning this portion subsequent to Part Three, as follows: "The only difficulty is, why the other assimilations do not weaken the argument; and indeed it would seem from experience and feeling,

[48] Cf. Bayle, *Continuation des Pensées Diverses, Oeuvres,* Vol. III, art. VIII, p. 199.

that they do not weaken it so much as we might naturally expect. A theory to solve this would be very acceptable."[49] Despite the portrayal of the Deity by analogy with man in all his finitude, his necessity of social co-operation, his limited genius, his bodily nature, and his grosser physical existence,—despite these assimilations pointed out so relentlessly by the sceptic, the position stands fairly well. There is still a design or purpose in the whole of nature. And that inevitable conception is a real ground for religion.

It is quite probable, however, that Parts Four and Five both contain turns of expression which Hume gave the discussion after his first "sample" of the *Dialogues*. There are suggestions of things which must be fully discussed before we are entitled to come to any decision on the subject. The equal plausibility of a naturalistic view of all the processes within the universe, and even of its origin as an order, weakens any dogmatic assurance we may feel with regard to an Intelligence as the source of all order. The curious behavior of the dogmatist in stopping short with his inferences, when he reaches the conception of a Deity like man in his Intelligence, raises the question of the motives to all such thinking about the world-order and its cause. And it is also a question whether we are not compelled to make God finite, if we can understand him only by reference to finite human intelligence. These suggestions of Nature as sufficient to herself without God, and of God as without Infinity, fall only in a casual, rambling way from the sceptic. But they point forward to a thorough and more elaborate discussion of these matters.

The present discussion rounds out, however, a definite topic. All the disputants have had their attention brought upon one and the same fact, the order of nature. They have been considering the normal reaction of the human mind to this fact. The dogmatist has declared his thought: the order everywhere known conveys to our mind the idea of

[49] Burton, Vol. I, p. 336.

a Being present with us like other persons, because the operations of nature are intelligible to us and have a meaning. It is this inescapable *meaning* upon which Cleanthes insists. But Philo, the restless-minded philosopher, has been interested in the *way* in which we conceive of this Intelligence. The whole debate has followed from the honest attempt of Cleanthes to give an account of the religious thought that will make it seem reasonable to one who requires good argument.

The only description a dogmatist can give of his thought is that in terms of causal inference. Without asking in advance whether causal reasoning is appropriate to this situation, without even ascertaining whether causes ought to be inferred for every event, or every thing that enters our view, Cleanthes represents his conception of the Deity as the outcome of such argument. By analogy with our experience of the human mind in its effecting of arrangement or order, we conclude from the universal order the existence of a cause distinct from the universe itself and beyond it, a Being like a human mind, a God. Philo first attempts to estop this inference. It cannot possibly take place. It is logically impossible for us to *conceive* of a Being unique, with no other truly comparable to it. Such a Being we cannot know because we must have experience of similar events, of the origin of universes from beings of mind. This case is, by the very definition of "universe" and "God," completely beyond our experience. But Cleanthes simply points to the fact: we *do* think such a Being exists, logic or no logic. In this dogmatic insistence Cleanthes is, of course, admitting the claim of the sceptic. His thought of a God is not an "argument" in the sense of being a piece of reasoning following the canons of strict, scientific method. Yet this only reveals the extraordinary truth that there are modes of thought which may be called "reasonable" without being regular and logical. The inference of a Being, something like the human mind as we know it, is not so much reasoning as a natural judgment like that

of beauty in art and literature. And thus, though our subject-matter (the Whole of all things and a single Being as its cause) be unique and without parallel, our thinking of these matters is not at all anomalous, for it has parallels in our life of aesthetic appreciation. A philosopher will be wise, therefore, to stand by human "experience and sentiment," refusing to reject this thought because it does not happen to conform to the empirical standards which his reason has been able to formulate from a consideration of the most stable body of existing knowledge, natural science. To refuse to believe in this religious view of nature is to be dogmatic in our very scepticism. Our inference is natural and inevitable. It is not the notion of benighted people living in gross ignorance of the true causes of events within nature. It can only occur to those who have sufficiently lifted themselves out of their dark superstition to see the regularity and uniformity of events. Then they contemplate the *order* of nature and believe in something *intelligible* like ourselves. This happens wherever there is human nature. No sceptic can gainsay the reasonableness of the belief.

Philo then has his turn. If the religious argument lacks scientific method, it will not have that remarkable *stability* which marks the body of truth we call science. And this is easily demonstrated. The moment we are launched upon causal reasoning we find ourselves carried beyond a Mind as the source of all things to a cause of that mind, which cause seems most likely to be matter itself,—which then raises the further question: why we will start upon all this venture beyond nature, if we only end by attributing order to nature as we find it before us? Theism vanishes into naturalism. But if we can still ignore the logic of science applied to this case, let us see what is the internal logic of our position. We compare God with man of whom we have experience, and we specify, very particularly, the realm of animate nature as the evidence for our view. But this commits us to a finite, imperfect, manifold, corporeal, and very gross God,—the polytheism of antiquity. This spells

the ruin of the argument, for it establishes not the God of religion but those fictitious beings of mythology. Our argument, then, runs either to naturalism or to paganism. Is there a "theology" at all in it?

Cleanthes points out that the religious thought still holds our attention. All the difficulties which Philo has raised do not get rid of the hypothesis of design. Despite those unwelcome assimilations to our conception of the Deity, which logic requires and actual history shows to have been made in the past, we think of God as an Intelligence and a Purpose. This idea of God survives such criticism because it has its origin in the meaning which the order of nature has for every human mind. That order is undeniable. And it is so interesting a fact to mankind,—as the prefatory letter tells us,—that we cannot restrain our search for some position on the matter, something to believe as the truth. The sceptic is certainly right in showing the great defect of our thinking here, in the way of accuracy. But the only position we have so far is this anthropomorphic theism proposed by Cleanthes. It is the one that we must accept, in lieu of any better system of thought. This is the provisional conclusion which Hume had in mind, doubtless, when he spoke to Elliot of making Cleanthes the hero of his argument.[50]

[50] It is easy here to mistake Hume's intentions. He is not settling the issue by an appeal to feeling and sentiment. He had done something of the sort in the little dialogue appended to his second *Enquiry* and had received an enthusiastic letter from Elliot urging him to uphold a religious dogmatism in the same way. Hume replied, only a month before sending his friend the first sample of the *Dialogues*: "Your notion of correcting subtlety of sentiment, is certainly very just with regard to morals, which depend upon sentiment; and in politics and natural philosophy, whatever conclusion is contrary to certain matters of fact, must certainly be wrong, and there must some error lie somewhere in the argument, whether we be able to show it or not. But in metaphysics or theology, I cannot see how either of these plain and obvious standards of truth can have place. Nothing there can correct bad reasoning but good reasoning." Furthermore, with regard to the holding of beliefs upon grounds of the "most satisfaction and convenience" he adds, "I have only to observe, that such a conduct is founded on the most universal and determined scepticism, joined to a little indolence." Burton, Vol. I, pp. 324-6, letter dated Feb. 19, 1751. So he repeated to Elliot that a genuine "theory" would be needed to solve his problem in Part Five, Burton, p. 336. That theory is *not* stated here, and the argument is by no means decisive for theism.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Naturalism

EARLY in his career Hume had been stirred by the vision of a striking alternative to the theistic view of the world. It was this that made him so long dissatisfied with the common opinion—and that made him sceptical. Just before he began work upon the *Dialogues* there had appeared the first volumes of Buffon's monumental *Natural History* (1749), a comprehensive delineation of the world, done in the naturalistic manner.[1] During the course of the next ten years Hume applied his own mature genius, in the later Parts of the *Dialogues*, to a consistent study of this philosophical position. What had been restless imaginings now became definitely formulated hypotheses. He devoted himself to careful scrutiny of the new conception of Nature, and sought to understand its meaning in every possible aspect. He presented it first as a plausible conclusion of argument from experience; then he showed its parity with theism, if we reason abstractly; and finally, he considered it as a judgment of feeling about the value of human life. Throughout the remainder of the *Dialogues*, then, this naturalism stares us in the face, as it had confronted Hume himself for so many years.

He knew only too well, when he wrote to Strahan about his work, that these latter-day speculations would meet with considerable prejudice.[2] Yet he observed to Adam Smith, just ten days before his death: "On revising them (which I have not done these fifteen years) I find that nothing can be more cautiously and more artfully written."[3] For he had gone about the writing with a disciplined sense of what is required of one who proposes such

[1] When Hume went to Paris, in 1763, he was particularly interested in the opinions of Buffon.—Burton, Vol. II, p. 181.
[2] See above, pp. 304 *f.*
[3] Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

novelties to the public. He had learned from such masters of science as Galileo that a fine skill is needed to draw men from their preconceptions and carry their minds insensibly from their usual view to more careful and disinterested thought. Thus his intention was not to persuade us of the truth of this new position, but only to get us to attend to it as a serious view. He proceeded, adroitly, to introduce a slight modification of the original argument on behalf of theism, a change clearly perfecting the analogy. He gave to Cleanthes, the dogmatist, the rôle of criticising this improved form of the reasoning from experience. Cleanthes pointed out an imperfection, and some consequences damaging to religion. This drove the argument forward to another formulation, in which the pious Demea himself participated,—the naturalistic hypothesis. In this way both the religious-minded disputants collaborated to make the argument from experience accurate within its own limits. It became apparent, at last, that this mode of thought dispenses entirely with a God, or with anything satisfying the religious aspirations of mankind. Whether we like this conclusion or not, we have, at least, been beguiled into an unprejudiced consideration of the new theory of naturalism.

Demea remarks upon the slightness of a religion based only on the idea of design in nature. We have a theology so ill-defined that we cannot know what to believe, or what to perform as our duty to the Deity. We have no creed. And for "all the purposes of life" this theory is totally without use. It is not more satisfactory, then, to the man of religion, than to the man of intellect.

And Philo avers that it will seem more unsatisfactory in a moment. He has another hypothesis which appears very plausible, if we reason according to the method insisted upon by Cleanthes. Hitherto this empirical method has been formulated as argument from like effects to like causes. But there is an insuperable difficulty in logic when

we attempt to apply such reasoning to a case in which the Whole of existence is itself one of the terms of the thought, for we know nothing comparable to it in our experience. In scientific reasoning we are always careful to ascertain by experience the important resemblance of one part of nature to another part. It is hardly proper, then, to call the religious inference a piece of true reasoning or argument. But Cleanthes has claimed emphatically that we always reason in this manner: we start with something similar to things with which we are familiar, though we do not *prove* the similarity, and we then infer a reality that is genuinely new while yet resembling the things we know in our experience. It was this assertion of an assimilative process natural to the mind but not amenable to logic, a process analogous to our aesthetic judgments, that had so confounded Philo in Part Three. He now formulates the theory of this mode of thinking: "where several known circumstances are observed to be similar, the unknown will also be found similar."[4] This the dogmatist must make the rule of his reasoning. It follows, therefore, that if we can discern any other point of similarity between the world and some parts of it with which we are familiar, we shall catch sight of a fresh aspect of the situation, and draw a natural conclusion from our own experience that will be very different from the religious belief.

The world, in so far as we have any knowledge of it, bears a very great resemblance to an animate body. For it seems to be moving under impulses like those of life and movement, and it exhibits a kind of orderly circulation of matter within it, and waste, and repair, and an intimate sympathy and co-operation of all parts looking to their own preservation along with that of the whole body. It is very like a living organism. And thence we may infer that it has a soul, actuating it, and actuated by it. This soul of the world, then, is our Deity.

[4] Cf. Buffon, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 *ff.*

That thought had been prevalent in antiquity, and was a very natural way of looking at the situation. People were intimately aware of both body and mind, and never thought of the one without the other. Nowhere in experience could they find an instance of a spiritual being existing apart and by itself. Mind and body they also knew to be distinctly organised, each in its own way. When they contemplated the universe, therefore, they could not refrain from conceiving a mind along with it, and an organization in both realities, naturally inherent in them.

This is another kind of anthropomorphism, differing somewhat from our modern theism—yet it seems quite immune to any serious objection from Cleanthes. For he surely would not pretend to argue, *a priori*, that it is absolutely impossible for an animate body to have capacities of self-organisation. Nor would he overlook the weight of that popular opinion in antiquity, since it arose from a common human experience. The only decisive objection would be a claim that our partial experience is, in general, too limited a means for attaining truth in regard to the Whole of all things—but this Cleanthes can never urge without forsaking entirely his own contention that we really come to know what God is through our human experience. In that case, if he still believed at all in a God, he would be forced to adopt what he has disparagingly styled "mysticism."

This view Cleanthes admits he has never entertained, though it is "a pretty natural one."[5] Offhand he can see no objection to it. His candor and restraint elicit a tribute of praise from Philo, who would have plunged incautiously into the raising of innumerable difficulties for any theory not his own.

One point alone Cleanthes is eventually able to criticise. The analogy of the universe with an animal body is not exact enough to satisfy us. There are no organs of sense and no nervous system to make thought and physical movement possible in this being. The world seems more

[5] Cf. Berkeley, *Siris*, Vol. III, art. 153, p. 199.

like a sheer vegetable than an animal. And if we choose to be thus precise in our reasoning, we find ourselves unable to conclude the reality of the *Anima Mundi*,—for we are not disposed, usually, to attribute a soul to plants. A Deity, then, as a Being distinct from Nature, disappears from view. Thus the argument is unsatisfactory to religion.

The argument implies, moreover, "the eternity of the world." For the world endowed originally with order must be conceived to exist always so, without beginning or end, and without creation. To this Cleanthes takes exception, because he sees the "strongest reasons and probabilities" for a belief that the world is even now taking some form and order, and that it must have once begun doing so.

The usual argument for this view is from human progress—the arts and sciences and culture of man have all had an origin late in time. But a generalisation from this dawning of human civilisation to the origin of all the world is "a little precarious." History shows us alternations and revolutions in the course of human affairs, civilisations coming and going, the apparently primitive and barbarous following after a condition superior in culture, as the dark ages of Christendom did the days of knowledge, political liberty, and economic welfare in Greek and Roman antiquity, almost cutting us off from any knowledge of all that priceless lore of the earlier period. It is not certain, therefore, that mankind is essentially progressing from some first beginning, and we cannot use such an argument to infer a similar tendency, and origin, of the universe.

But Cleanthes has new testimony for this belief. "Lucullus was the first that brought cherry-trees from Asia to Europe; though that tree thrives so well in many European climates, that it grows in the woods without any culture. Is it possible, that, throughout a whole eternity, no European had ever passed into Asia, and thought of transplanting so delicious a fruit into his own country?

Or if the tree was once transplanted and propagated, how could it ever afterwards perish? Empires may rise and fall; liberty and slavery succeed alternately; ignorance and knowledge give place to each other; but the cherry-tree will still remain in the woods of Greece, Spain, and Italy, and will never be affected by the revolutions of human society." Within two thousand years vines have been introduced into France, where they flourish, and other new plants and animals into America. Such facts from natural history prove how very young our world is.[6] And we have good reason to rely upon them, since the principles of nature in regard to life on this earth are "more constant and steady" than those of human society. It would take practically a "total convulsion of the elements" to "destroy all the European animals and vegetables, which are now to be found in the Western world."

Yet this is precisely what Philo suspects to have happened. "Strong and almost incontestable proofs may be traced over the whole earth, that every part of this globe has continued for many ages entirely covered with water." Nature generally seems quite as given to revolutions as human nature.[7] We have no certain evidence anywhere, then, for an origin of order.

These suspicions of many and tremendous changes in the universe are not prejudicial to our new and sceptical hypothesis. "Though order were supposed inseparable from matter, and inherent in it; yet may matter be susceptible of many and great revolutions, through the endless periods of eternal duration. The incessant changes, to which every part of it is subject, seem to intimate some such general transformations; though at the same time, it is observable, that all the changes and corruptions, of which we have ever had experience, are but passages from one state of order to another; nor can matter ever rest in total deformity and confusion. What we see in the parts,

[6] Cf. Berkeley, *Alciphron*, *Dialogue* 6, sec. 23.
[7] Cf. Buffon, *op. cit.*, *Second Discours*, pp. 383 *f.*, 449 *f.*

we may infer in the whole; at least, that is the method of reasoning on which you rest your whole theory. And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature (which I never willingly should do) I esteem none more plausible, than that which ascribes an eternal, inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties; and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory, that we must, sooner or later, have recourse to, whatever system we embrace. How could things have been as they are, were there not an original, inherent principle of order somewhere, in thought or in matter? And it is very indifferent to which of these we give the preference. Chance has no place, on any hypothesis, sceptical or religious. Everything is surely governed by steady, inviolable laws. And were the inmost essence of things laid open to us, we should then discover a scene, of which, at present, we can have no idea. Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, we should clearly see that it was absolutely impossible for them, in the smallest article, ever to admit of any other disposition."

So the order of nature may be simply acknowledged as an eternal fact, without admiration for it as the expression of Intelligence or Mind. We know it now only through our particular laws of science. What we should see within it, could we have all things perfectly revealed to us, is probably this, that all existences *must* be just as they are, and that they cannot possibly exist otherwise. We should simply have *insight*, then, into that "necessity" which is now envisaged in scientific law. But we should not, even so, be face to face with God, as with another person like ourselves.

Though Philo has declared his own preference for this "sceptical hypothesis," he merely points out, in conclusion, that all systems are equally tenable, and that none makes us any the wiser in regard to the fact before us. Cleanthes

himself would be the first to object to a revival of the pagan theogony of Hesiod, on the ground "that nothing is gained by this hypothesis" of thirty thousand deities arising from "the unknown powers of nature." Such recourse to the unknown is equally available to one who would argue to the descent of man and animals directly from nature, even though they are numerous and imperfect beings. And, carrying the same difficulty into the present case, we see that we, too, have no advantage, in supposing one universal and mysterious Deity full of all the perfections of visible nature, over a polytheist who conceives a society of deities with those several excellencies distributed among them. So long as we cannot know anything besides the order of nature, we have no ground whatsoever for deciding upon naturalism, polytheism, or theism. And this inconclusiveness is the fundamental defect of the argument from experience which Cleanthes has urged as a sufficient basis for religion.

Now Philo returns to the suggestion, already made by Cleanthes, of a close resemblance between the world and a vegetable. This almost results in the destruction of that original inference of a design. If the resemblance is even greater than that to an animal, the cause of the universe ought to be conceived as similar to that of plants. The origin of nature would be something like a generation or a vegetation. Reason and thought must then lose their primacy in nature. And God would have no human meaning.

It is to be noted here that Demea alone engages in discussion with Philo on this new theory. We should not, however, make too much of this dramatic feature, for it may have been only Hume's masterly art in this work. The rôles had to be distributed so that every character would talk some sense. And Demea's objections are needed to make the sceptical hypothesis more definite and obvious. Moreover, Cleanthes is the host, with a certain obligation not to be too prominent in the conversation. It is also true,

however, that Philo himself does not profess to eliminate the idea of design in Part Seven—his view only goes "near to subvert all your reasoning." Thus Cleanthes is silent, watching the course of the argument to see its import. He finally makes one comment, and it is not with any triumphant decision: he confesses himself baffled and puzzled.[8] His only retort is that none of the party is truly convinced of the new hypothesis.

At the outset Demea seems very much in the dark about the drift of the argument, so that Philo must review it. Every question of fact or existence must be proved, according to Cleanthes, by experience. The existence of God is no exception to this rule. Now our experience of the world is that of a fabric resembling human art—hence the cause of this great piece of work is an intelligence like that of man. Notwithstanding the great disparity between the things compared, Cleanthes dares to make such an inference. But we have come upon other parts of this world, well known to us, with which the whole universe seems likewise comparable. "These parts are animals and vegetables. The world plainly resembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting-loom. . . . The cause, therefore, of the world, we may infer to be something similar or analogous to generation or vegetation."

The process may be easily imagined. "In like manner as a tree sheds its seeds into the neighboring fields, and produces other trees, so the great vegetable, the world, or this planetary system, produces within itself certain seeds, which, being scattered into the surrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. A comet, for instance, is the seed of a world; and after it has been fully ripened, by passing from sun to sun, and star to star, it is at last tossed into the unformed elements, which everywhere surround this

[8] Cf. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, who holds that Cleanthes is unmoved by the state of things, and superior to the onslaught of the sceptic.—*The Idea of God*, etc., Gifford Lectures, Oxford, 1917, p. 13.

universe, and immediately sprouts up into a new system.

"Or if, for the sake of variety (for I see no other advantage) we should suppose this world to be an animal; a comet is the egg of this animal; and in like manner as an ostrich lays its egg in the sand, which, without any farther care, hatches the egg, and produces a new animal; so . . ." Demea interrupts with some very pertinent questions.

What are the data for such views? Is a mere resemblance observed between a world and a part of it sufficient to warrant either or both of these conclusions, that the origin of the whole is a process of vegetation or generation? These are exactly the questions Philo has been urging upon our attention throughout the debate. And Demea continues, asking whether we know anything about this generative or vegetative process which is being attributed to the universe as a whole. We have no insight into it, Philo admits, but then we are no better off if we resort to the process of thought. "These words, *generation*, *reason*, mark only certain powers and energies in nature, whose effects are known, but whose essence is incomprehensible; and one of these principles, more than the other, has no privilege for being made a standard to the whole of nature."

Since we are dealing with so great a subject as the universe, we ought to take the most comprehensive view of it, to do it justice. "In this little corner of the world alone, there are four principles, *reason*, *instinct*, *generation*, *vegetation*, which are similar to each other, and are the causes of similar effects." We may readily suppose other principles not familiar to us. We can, of course, read the situation in terms of any one of these known factors, and we should then have something plausible in our conclusion. But it seems very biassed to limit ourselves exclusively to the operations of our own minds as the type of all the processes of the world. We should be justified in this, did we understand our own reason better than instinct and vegetation. Yet this is not the case. Nothing is more mysterious

to us than our own minds. Not even the vague reality we call "nature" is more inexplicable. Consequently, we are still very far from making the order of the universe intelligible to ourselves. In any event, there is as much sense in the supposition of a generation or a vegetation as in that of a design.

Yet Demea cannot think of order without conceiving that what produces it must, of course, *perceive* its own work.[9] "You need only look around you . . . to satisfy yourself with regard to this question. A tree bestows order and organisation on that tree, which springs from it, without knowing the order: an animal, in the same manner, on its offspring: a bird, on its nest: and instances of this kind are even more frequent in the world, than those of order, which arise from reason and contrivance." To assert, in despite of this experience, that order must proceed ultimately from a perceiving mind, and mind alone, is to raise a question which reason itself will never solve. It cannot be demonstrated *a priori* that order is necessarily and inseparably connected with thought, and not with matter. Besides, if we may here argue in the manner of Cleanthes, we are entitled to stop short with any cause we please, without asking for its cause, or for the explanation of the Being with which we choose to end our inquiries. Merely in so far as observation and experience go, however, our naturalism may be the truth. "Judging by our limited and imperfect experience, generation has some privileges above reason: for we see every day the latter arise from the former, never the former from the latter."

Thus the analogy of the world with an animate being seems more than ever tenable. Of course it is possible to compare the whole of existence with a thinking being,

[9] Cf. Bayle, *Continuation*, etc., Vol. III, pp. 217, 334, 340; Berkeley, *Dialogues*, Vol. I, pp. 429-31; *Siris*, art. 257; Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, p. 284: "Strange! That there should be *in nature* the Idea of an order and perfection which nature herself wants! That beings which arise from *nature* should be so perfect, as to discover imperfections in her constitution, and be wise enough to correct that wisdom by which they were made."

though the analogy is "less striking." A questioner may ask for a thinking source of this living world. But we can also infer, "with better authority" from experience, a living existence as the condition for any such divine thought itself: "Reason, in innumerable instances, is observed to arise from the principle of generation, and never to arise from any other principle."

There is no ground, then, for repudiating even the famous Brahman view "that the world arose from an infinite spider, who spun this whole complicated mass from his bowels, and annihilates afterwards the whole or any part of it, by absorbing it again, and resolving it into his own essence. Here is a species of cosmogony, which appears to us ridiculous; because a spider is a little contemptible animal, whose operations we are never likely to take for a model of the whole universe. . . .[10] Why an orderly system may not be spun from the belly as well as from the brain, it will be difficult for him [Cleanthes] to give a satisfactory reason."

At last Cleanthes speaks out, admitting the truth of Philo's statement. He is overwhelmed by the fertility of that sceptic's imagination: "I am not ashamed to acknowledge myself unable, on a sudden, to solve regularly such out-of-the-way difficulties as you incessantly start upon me: though I clearly see, in general, their fallacy and error." For there must be some "solution." Philo has had ready objections to any and all that are proposed. In this "common sense and reason" are entirely against him: "such whimsies as you have delivered, may puzzle but never can convince us."[11] Thus Hume recalls to us the dual claim which divides the philosophers throughout these conversations: there are insoluble problems from the side of

[10] Cf. Bayle, article on *Spinoza*, note A, quotation from Bernier, note 22.
[11] Cf. *Alciphron*, *Dialogue* 4, sec. 2: "They may perhaps puzzle, but never will convince me." Hume had characterised Berkeley's argument regarding abstract ideas with this phrase, in the *Enquiry*, Vol. II, p. 127 n. It seems to originate with Cicero, *De Finibus*, Book IV, chap. III (Loeb Classics, p. 309).

reason and yet there is a necessity of believing something. The situation is still a deadlock.

Philo continues to puzzle us. It is not his imagination that creates these difficulties, but the subject-matter itself. The case of organised nature may be interpreted according to a hundred different analogies of experience. "For instance; what if I should revive the old Epicurean hypothesis?[12] This is commonly, and I believe, justly, esteemed the most absurd system, that has yet been proposed; yet, I know not, whether, with a few alterations, it might not be brought to bear a faint appearance of probability. Instead of supposing matter infinite, as Epicurus did, let us suppose it finite. A finite number of particles is only susceptible of finite transpositions: and it must happen, in an eternal duration, that every possible order or position must be tried an infinite number of times. This world, therefore, with all its events, even the most minute, has before been produced and destroyed, and will again be produced and destroyed, without any bounds and limitations." That is a possibility not beyond our conception.

Now Demea cannot see how anything ever gets into motion without some being with a *will* to move it. But this is sheer dogmatism. "The beginning of motion in matter itself is as conceivable *a priori* as its communication from mind and intelligence." We can imagine the whole world as always in motion without any loss of the total quantity of motion in it throughout eternity. Certainly it is a fact of experience and history that matter has been continually in motion. Nothing is probably "at absolute rest" in the whole universe.

This aspect of the affair leads to another hypothesis squaring even better with the facts of our experience. "Is

[12]Cf. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, 1709, p. 298: "In length of time, amidst the infinite hurry and shock of beings, this *single odd world*, by accident, might have been struck out, and cast into some form (as among infinite *chances*, what is there that may not happen?). Also, Clarke, *A Demonstration*, art. 8, p. 55.

there a system, an order, an economy of things, by which matter can preserve that perpetual agitation, which seems essential to it, and yet maintain a constancy in the forms, which it produces? There certainly is such an economy: for this is actually the case with the present world. The continual motion of matter, therefore, in less than infinite transpositions, must produce this economy or order; and by its very nature, that order, when once established, supports itself, for many ages, if not to eternity. But wherever matter is so poised, arranged, and adjusted as to continue in perpetual motion, and yet preserve a constancy in the forms, its situation must, of necessity, have all the same appearance of art and contrivance, which we observe at present. All the parts of each form must have a relation to each other, and to the whole: and the whole itself must have a relation to the other parts of the universe; to the element, in which the form subsists; to the materials, with which it repairs its waste and decay; and to every other form, which is hostile or friendly. A defect in any of these particulars destroys the form; and the matter, of which it is composed, is again set loose, and is thrown into irregular motions and fermentations, till it unite itself to some other regular form. If no such form be prepared to receive it, and if there be a great quantity of this corrupted matter in the universe, the universe itself is entirely disordered; whether it be the feeble embryo of a world in its first beginnings, that is thus destroyed, or the rotten carcass of one, languishing in old age and infirmity. In either case, a chaos ensues; till finite, though innumerable revolutions produce at last some forms, whose parts and organs are so adjusted as to support the forms amidst a continued succession of matter.

"Suppose (for we shall endeavor to vary the expression) that matter were thrown into any position, by a blind, unguided force; it is evident that this first position must in all probability be the most confused and most disorderly imaginable, without any resemblance to those works of

human contrivance, which, along with a symmetry of parts, discover an adjustment of means to ends and a tendency to self-preservation. If the actuating force cease after this operation, matter must remain forever in disorder, and continue an immense chaos, without any proportion or activity. But suppose, that the actuating force, whatever it be, still continues in matter, this first position will immediately give place to a second, which will likewise in all probability be as disorderly as the first, and so on, through many successions of changes and revolutions. No particular order or position ever continues a moment unaltered. The original force, still remaining in activity, gives a perpetual restlessness to matter. Every possible situation is produced, and instantly destroyed. If a glimpse or dawn of order appears for a moment, it is instantly hurried away, and confounded, by that never-ceasing force, which actuates every part of matter.

"Thus the universe goes on for many ages in a continued succession of chaos and disorder. But is it not possible that it may settle at last, so as not to lose its motion and active force (for that we have supposed inherent in it) yet so as to preserve an uniformity of appearance, amidst the continual motion and fluctuation of its parts? This we find to be the case with the universe at present. Every individual is perpetually changing, and every part of every individual, and yet the whole remains, in appearance, the same. May we not hope for such a position, or rather be assured of it, from the eternal revolutions of unguided matter, and may not this account for all the appearing wisdom and contrivance, which is in the universe? Let us contemplate the subject a little, and we shall find, that this adjustment, if attained by matter, of a seeming stability in the forms, with a real and perpetual revolution or motion of parts, affords a plausible, if not a true solution of the difficulty.

"It is in vain, therefore, to insist upon the uses of the parts in animals or vegetables and their curious adjustment

to each other. I would fain know how an animal could subsist, unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find, that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter corrupting tries some new form? It happens, indeed, that the parts of the world are so well adjusted, that some regular form immediately lays claim to this corrupted matter: and if it were not so, could the world subsist? Must it not dissolve as well as the animal, and pass through new positions and situations; till in a great, but finite succession, it falls at last into the present or some such order?"

And now Cleanthes is very prompt with a criticism of such imaginary transformations of matter, where the particular forms that seem so stable to us are merely passing adjustments in the endless vicissitudes of sheer existence. The hypothesis implies a strict necessity in every organ or member of any body. But it will not account for the many "conveniences and advantages" enjoyed by men and animate creatures. "Two eyes, two ears, are not absolutely necessary for the subsistence of the species." Nor is it requisite for life that man should have the power to use the domestic animals and the various fruits and products of the earth which actually yield him "satisfaction and enjoyment." Such facts prove that nature is not so rigorously frugal. Indeed, they do more,—they constitute "a sufficient proof of design, and of a benevolent design, which gave rise to the order and arrangement of the universe."

Philo will admit "that the foregoing hypothesis is so far incomplete and imperfect" in its not showing us how things can naturally arrange themselves to make for human well-being and enjoyment. That is a fact unexplained by the theory. Yet this difficulty does not throw us back upon a theistic view as the only tenable one, for we still have insuperable objections to it. We suppose ideas to be archetypal, that is, to be the source whence real objects in the material world have their being, whereas all the ideas of our human experience present themselves to us as

ectypal, as copied from real objects existing independently of us. We give thought the primacy—yet "in all instances which we have ever seen, thought has no influence upon matter, except where that matter is so conjoined with it, as to have an equal reciprocal influence upon it."[13] Such action and reaction seems to be a universal law, which the theory of design contradicts. Remembering the plausible view of an eternal order in both mind and body, we ought to be very careful before we reject a system like that of naturalism merely because of some special difficulty. In truth, we ought to be scrupulous about taking any position at all, if every analogy is so defective when we examine it in detail.

From this observation Philo drifts to the careless attitude of scepticism. All systems of religion are fraught with tremendous difficulty. Each thinker has his hour of triumph, but only in pointing out the insurmountable objections to the tenets of every other. They all open the way for "a complete triumph" of the sceptic, who says "that no system ought ever to be embraced with regard to such subjects: for this plain reason, that no absurdity ought ever to be assented to with regard to any subject."[14] We would be wise, therefore, to suspend our judgment, believing nothing at all on this matter.

This dramatic conclusion of the three parts of the *Dialogues* which work out the naturalistic interpretation, in opposition to theism, is only calculated to provoke other attempts to show some foundation for belief in religion. The triumph of the sceptic is not so complete as to close all further argument. The discussion has demonstrated that all reasoning from experience is entirely inconclusive with regard to the source of the order of nature. Every position which is tried proves to be unstable. It contradicts some obvious fact of experience. We have no reason to believe any one of the systems we have explored. So far, the

[13] Cf. Berkeley, *Dialogues*, Vol. I, p. 475.
[14] Cf. Bayle, *Continuation*, etc., chap. cvi., p. 334.

claim of the sceptic is borne out. But several pertinent matters have come to our attention during the arguments. One is the seeming fact of our human enjoyment of life—not the mere living, but the deriving of satisfaction and good from the order of nature. Now naturalism stands by the conception of a sheer necessity in every organic arrangement, a necessity for the very subsistence of things. And Philo himself implicitly relies upon that idea of necessity, when he passes from the defence of naturalism to his careless scepticism: we *ought* to follow what reason alone declares. The question arises, then, what is this *necessity* that we should so scrupulously stick by it? That question is in the mind of both Cleanthes and Demea. The former is inclined to reduce the "necessity" to a mere feeling, and he would like to know why we should not *admire* the order of nature, and think of a good as well as an intelligent author of it. But the latter is wondering why the necessities of reason do not actually declare this very truth of religion, instead of holding us off from belief in it. And so Demea proposes, in Part Nine, a new proof for the existence of God, a proof from abstract reasoning itself.

There seems possible an "infallible demonstration" of the reality, and especially of the infinite nature, of God. "Whatever exists must have a cause or reason of its existence; it being absolutely impossible for any thing to produce itself, or be the cause of its own existence. In mounting up, therefore, from effects to causes, we must either go on in tracing an infinite succession, without any ultimate cause at all; or must at last have recourse to some ultimate cause, that is *necessarily* existent: now that the first supposition is absurd may be thus proved. In the infinite chain or succession of causes and effects, each single effect is determined to exist by the power or efficacy of that cause, which immediately preceded; but the whole eternal chain or succession, taken together, is not deter-

mined or caused by any thing: and yet it is evident that it requires a cause or reason, as much as any particular object, which begins to exist in time. The question is still reasonable, Why this particular succession of causes existed from eternity, and not any other succession, or no succession at all. If there be no necessarily-existent being, any supposition, which can be formed, is equally possible; nor is there any more absurdity in Nothing's having existed from eternity, than there is in that succession of causes, which constitutes the universe. What was it then, which determined something to exist rather than nothing, and bestowed being on a particular possibility, exclusive of the rest? External causes, there are supposed to be none. *Chance* is a word without a meaning. Was it *Nothing?* But that can never produce any thing. We must, therefore, have recourse to a necessarily-existent Being, who carries the *Reason* of his existence in himself; and who cannot be supposed not to exist without an express contradiction. There is consequently such a Being, that is, there is a Deity."

To Cleanthes falls the privilege of pointing out the error of this metaphysical argument, as Hume himself had discerned the error many years before. "I shall begin with observing, that there is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any arguments *a priori*. Nothing is demonstrable, unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing, that is distinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it."

Now it is supposed, that if we knew the essence of the Deity, we should have insight into the fact that this Deity *must* exist and cannot possibly be non-existent. The "rea-

son" of God's existence is declared, however, to be in Himself alone. For we can quite well conceive his non-existence. In fact, our limited capacities of mind have made his existence a very real question for us, instead of a fact so plain that we cannot deny it without absurdity. Moreover, there can be necessity only in the conceptions of mathematics. Thus the two words "*necessary existence*," when taken together, have no meaning, or at any rate, signify things which are not consistent with each other in our thought. The necessary is the logical; the existent is precisely that which can be otherwise than we perceive it, or have experience of it. By no manner of abstract argument, then, can we pretend to demonstrate logically the existence of any being.

Moreover, Demea ought to realise, after the preceding argument, that the material universe itself satisfies the requirements of his conception of a being necessarily-existent. Samuel Clarke had attempted, indeed, to exclude this possibility: "Any particle of matter may be *conceived* to be annihilated; and any form may be *conceived* to be altered. Such an annihilation or alteration, therefore, is not impossible."[15] Hence the world of matter is not a being whose existence is absolutely necessary. But the same argument holds against the Deity. We can conceive God to be non-existent, and his attributes to be other than they seem. And if some unknown qualities make God necessarily-existent in a wonderful way mankind cannot conceive, why may not these same unknown qualities belong essentially to matter? We can never prove by reason what the unknown may or may not do. In the end, then, the material universe is as necessary in its existence as the Deity, if we allow such a notion at all.

A further problem arises from the nature of causal order. We usually ascribe causes to events that have a begin-

[15] *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-23.

ning in time, and think of these causes as prior to the events. We talk, in the present instance, of an eternal succession of objects in our world, and refer to some ultimate or original cause of the Whole—and this Cause we ought, in strictness, to conceive as prior to and beyond all time. But then the maxim of causation itself would be entirely irrelevant, and without meaning.

Moreover, it is not the same thing to infer a cause for every part of an infinite order, and to infer a Cause for the Whole. Events within the world of time and space may properly be considered in causal relationship with each other. But the summing up of all objects and events into a Whole is an "arbitrary act of the mind." The Universe is not the same as an actual occurrence of things in our experience. And to explain such a conceived unit by a cause that exists beyond it in time and place seems entirely gratuitous, if we have already explained every particular event by reference to its specific cause within that whole.

It is dangerous to religion, Philo adds, in confirmation of Cleanthes, to bring in this idea of necessity at all. "'Tis observed by arithmeticians, that the products of 9 compose always either 9 or some lesser product of 9; if you add together all the characters, of which any of the former products is composed. Thus, of 18, 27, 36, which are products of 9, you make 9 by adding 1 to 8, 2 to 7, 3 to 6. Thus, 369 is a product also of 9; and if you add 3, 6, and 9, you make 18, a lesser product of 9. To a superficial observer, so wonderful a regularity may be admired as the effect either of chance or design: but a skilful algebraist immediately concludes it to be the work of necessity, and demonstrates, that it must forever result from the nature of these numbers. Is it not probable, I ask, that the whole economy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity, though no human algebra can furnish a key, which solves the difficulty? And instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen, that, could we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see

why it was absolutely impossible, they could ever admit of any other disposition?"[16]

But Philo is not interested now in developing that point. He believes it a mistake to attempt to find truth in these topics by any abstract reasoning. People of a certain type of mind are smitten by the clarity and the discoveries of mathematics,—they then carry over "the same habit of thinking to subjects, where it ought not to have place. Other people, even of good sense and the best inclined to religion, feel always some deficiency in such arguments, though they are not perhaps able to explain distinctly where it lies. A certain proof, that men ever did, and ever will derive their religion from other sources than from this species of reasoning."

This Part explains why Hume ignored the metaphysical argument at the opening of the *Dialogues*, and entered straightway upon an argument from experience. Here is the one point on which both Philo and Cleanthes are in complete agreement with each other. There is a decisive objection to any demonstration of the existence of God by pure reason. Berkeley had put aside all such argument in his dialogues, but he had not explained why. He was one of those men "of good sense and the best inclined to religion" who felt the defect in such reasoning but who could not tell what it was. This was Hume's own achievement, which he puts in the mouth of Cleanthes. And it is the inquisitive Philo who adds, that mankind must come to religion by ways other than such abstract argument.

So Demea announces his opinion "that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breast; and from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning, is led to seek protection from that Being, on whom he and all nature is dependent. So anxious or so tedious are even the best scenes of life,

[16] Cf. Bayle, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, chap. cvi, p. 334.

that futurity is still the object of all our hopes and fears."

It seems to Philo, too, that "a talent of eloquence and strong imagery is more requisite than that of reasoning and argument" to bring religion home to mankind. What every one feels within himself it is unnecessary to prove. The sole need is to make it a more intimate and forcible conviction.

Scepticism is certainly out of place, Demea remarks, when all men declare this evil in their lives "from their own immediate feeling and experience." And Philo, with his propensity toward expert testimony, adduces, especially, the witness of "the poets, who speak from sentiment, without a system."

Human unhappiness is universal. Poets, scientists, philosophers, and statesmen,—all men declare this fact. Though Leibnitz and Archbishop King denied it, "can any man hope by a simple denial (for the subject scarcely admits of reasoning) to bear down the united testimony of mankind, founded on sense and consciousness?" Man is but an animal, and he shares the lot of animals. He dwells with them on an earth "cursed and polluted" where he and they are in "perpetual war" with each other; where he lives in need, in terror, in anxiety; where he finds something evil in every kind of existence. Not even is man, the vaunted social being, exempt from this animal necessity of preying upon his kind. Although he may co-operate to a certain extent with his fellows to ward off physical enemies, he raises up enemies within himself, in his own imagination,—his superstitions and fears. He suffers, in his civilisation, from disease and disorders of mind. "Man is the greatest enemy of man." "Were a stranger to drop, on a sudden, into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, an hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strewed with carcasses, a fleet floundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine, or pestilence. To turn the gay side of life to him, and give him a notion of its

pleasures; whither should I conduct him? To a ball, to an opera, to court? He might justly think, that I was only showing him a diversity of distress and sorrow. . . . We are terrified, not bribed to the continuance of our existence."[17] Life is not worth living.

While Demea and Philo are enjoying this dismal picture of man and his existence, Cleanthes is silent; but upon the conclusion of their tirade he remarks, quietly, "I can observe something like what you mention in some others, . . . but I confess, I feel little or nothing of it in myself, and hope that it is not so common as you represent it."[18]

Demea offers him ironical congratulation for so blessed a singularity. It does not seem possible for any man to be exempt from unhappiness. Everybody of importance has acknowledged a profound discontent with existence. Even Cleanthes' own friends will be heard to bewail both the shortness of life and the vanity of such life as they have known. They are so very wretched that they express themselves in contradictions.

At this Philo, ever interested in contradiction and logical difficulty, asks Cleanthes whether he still holds to his anthropomorphic theism, in view of this plain fact of evil. Is the Deity known to us through our human experience? Are there "moral attributes" disclosed to us which resemble the justice, benevolence, and mercy of men? Granting that the Deity is infinite in power, we infer from the fact of unhappiness that He is not willing we should be happy. Granting an infinity of wisdom, we cannot suppose Him unable to effect his Will, and again we must conclude his lack of interest in our happiness. How, then, shall we understand God's good-will and mercy?

There remain, too, the logical questions of Epicurus: "Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is He

[17] Cf. Bayle, Article on *Manichéens*: "prisons, hospitals, gibbets, and beggars."—Article on *Tullia*, repeating Cicero's objection to the view of Lactantius "that good things of this world surpass the evil."

[18] Cf. Leibnitz, *Essais de Theodicée, De la Justice de Dieu*, arts. 13, 251, pp. 109, 266; Hutcheson, *Essay*, sec. 6, art. 4, pp. 185-6, 190.

impotent? Is He able, but not willing? Then is He malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"[19]

"You ascribe, Cleanthes, (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to Nature. But what, I beseech you, is the object of that curious artifice and machinery, which she has displayed in all animals? The preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species. It seems enough for her purpose, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without any care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it. No resource for this purpose: no machinery, in order merely to give pleasure or ease: no fund of pure joy and contentment: no indulgence without some want or necessity accompanying it. At least, the few phenomena of this nature are overbalanced by opposite phenomena of still greater importance."

Some things like our feeling for music, harmony, and all kinds of beauty, are not, of course, absolutely necessary for self-preservation and the propagation of the species. But a greater number of entirely useless sufferings fill our lives. This is a strange way for the divine good-will to work. Certainly we should not liken it to the quality of our own human benevolence. Only mystics can assert these attributes in the Deity, deriving them from the "infinitely perfect, but incomprehensible" nature of the Deity.[20]

Cleanthes sees at once that this is another case of "pious declamation" on the part of his friend the sceptic. The real intent of Philo's remarks all this while has been to deny anything of the nature of Providence to the Deity. He has been building up a case against theism through pretending to endorse Demea's pessimistic views of human life. Cleanthes challenges him: "If you can make out the present point, and prove mankind to be unhappy or corrupted, there is an end at once of all religion." For there will be no religious meaning in a "purpose and intention

[19] Cf. Bayle, article on *Pauliciens*, note *e*.
[20] Cf. *Alciphron, Dialogue* 4, sec. 17.

to nature" whose existence is granted, but whose goodness remains ambiguous.

But Demea throws himself impulsively into the argument. It is entirely possible to maintain a religious belief on the assumption of the absolute evil of human life. Whatever is evil in this life is made good at a future period of existence. And then, taking a larger view of all existence, men will see the whole order of reality and its goodness, and they will witness the absolutely perfect nature of God the Providence.

Cleanthes objects vehemently to any such argument for a Providence. We can know the character of the divine intention only by our present experience. We believe that God must be good. Now the theologian harps upon the rooted evil of life as we know it, and solves his problem by *supposing* another life beyond the present where we should be able to verify what we *must* believe about the Deity. But this amounts, precisely, to piling one hypothesis upon another.[21] The question still remains: how do we *know* this Providence and how are we assured of the future life to justify our belief which is threatened by the fact of evil?

Cleanthes deliberately takes his stand upon the worth of human existence, denying the essential misery and evil of it. Those gruesome pictures of man's infirmity and desolation are exaggerated. Health is more common than illness, pleasure than pain, and happiness than unhappiness. Enjoyment of life is real. And only by experience of such a sort can we infer the goodness of the divine intention and purpose, and know that the Deity is truly a Providence.

That this is the fact Philo questions. Pleasure may be more "frequent" than pain, but it is less "violent and durable," so that it counts for less in our estimation.

[21] Cf. Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, Part 2, Sec. 3, *A Providence, Recapitulation.*

But the whole argument is in jeopardy, because it involves an appeal to feeling, and it plainly contradicts "every one's feeling and experience." Life is not regarded by all persons as intrinsically worth while. The very thought of a future life reveals that estimate. "No decisive proofs can ever be produced against this authority; nor is it possible for you to compute, estimate, and compare all the pains and all the pleasures in the lives of all men and of all animals: and thus by your resting the whole system of religion on a point, which, from its very nature, must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess, that that system is equally uncertain."

But a difficulty exists even if we grant the satisfactoriness of life. "Why is there any misery at all in the world?" If the Deity is infinite in power and wisdom and goodness, even this modicum of evil must be impossible. It cannot be due to chance. "Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity." Our ordinary standards of truth are inapplicable to this subject,—the claim of Philo throughout this argument.

One thing is certainly evident. We can never *prove* the perfections of the nature of the Deity from the phenomena of life, wherein good and evil are commingled and confused. It would be possible to show that pain and unhappiness are *compatible* with the existence of a divine Being, if we already knew the nature of such a Being by other evidence. But we are supposed to arrive at our idea of God by an inference from this very experience of the quality of our human life. Since we do not deny the fact of some evil in it, we cannot reach the conception of a Providence by way of any empirical reasoning.

"Here, Cleanthes, I find myself at ease in my argument. Here I triumph. Formerly, when we argued concerning the natural attributes of intelligence and design, I needed all

my sceptical and metaphysical subtlety to elude your grasp. In many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever possible for us to repose any weight on them. But there is no view of human life or of the condition of mankind, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone. It is your turn now to tug the laboring oar, and to support your philosophical subtleties against the dictates of plain reason and experience."

This means a victory for Philo. It is as plain, if not plainer, than that earlier triumph of Cleanthes when he upheld the purposive interpretation of nature.[22] The world signifies something to us which is like our own intelligence and purpose. That is an important assimilation of nature with our personal existence. All the ingenious devices of Philo have not banished this thought from our minds. Philo admits it himself. But when we carry this same method of thinking to the experience mankind has of good and evil, pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness, we find ourselves genuinely baffled. We cannot liken the Deity to a being with good purposes as we know them in ourselves. For the reality of evil cannot be doubted. Its importance and meaning are above that of the good. There is no weight, moreover, in an optimistic reading of human affairs, interpreting pleasure and goodness to be prepon-

[22] Cf. Clarke, *op. cit.*, art. 12, p. 111. In the history of Hume's own thinking the sceptical triumph is actually earlier than what is represented in Part Three. It appeared in the essay, *Of a Particular Providence and a Future State.* Hume could there only point out a certain dissatisfaction with the scepticism. The present phase of the discussion is thus a restatement of the first and easier victory of the sceptic. Philo is very explicit in his admission of the difficulty of refuting the hypothesis of design altogether.

derant and more frequent in our experience. When Philo had argued that there were *more* instances of thought arising from natural organisms than of material order from mind, when he emphasised the quantitative disparity between the universal operations and the work of mind, when he multiplied views to compete with the hypothesis of design,—all in order to make his point that we ought not to conclude anything on such a subject, he was confounded by the insistent dogmatist: this situation of order in nature has *meaning* for mankind, and must be interpreted in the most reasonable way possible. The same argument now holds against Cleanthes. All quantitative estimates of the value of human life are irrelevant. Evil is so *significant* that we cannot argue about human life without having it chiefly in mind. And from such considerations we cannot prove the goodness of God.

This triumph of Philo aligns Hume with the older orthodoxy, rather than with the optimistic theism of the eighteenth century. He is sounding the spirit of man somewhat more deeply, perhaps, than Bishop Berkeley did. All the questions which Berkeley had waived, in *Alciphron*, Hume faces squarely and resolutely, following "plain reason and experience," as every interpreter of human nature ought to do. He seems more disposed to the sobriety of Bishop Butler, who pointed out, in his chapter *Of a State of Probation*, that life is a period of trial and suffering, teaching man something of essential value, and giving meaning to our religious belief in Providence and Immortality. To be sure, the mature Berkeley is also pessimistic about life. But he seems always to avoid the problem of evil. It is precisely in recognising the importance of this question that Hume seems to approach, in his own latter-day thoughts, to the basic tradition of the human sentiments about religion. The affiliation of Philo the sceptic with the deeply pious Demea is probably no mere accident in this drama of Hume's philosophy.

How, then, would a philosophical dogmatist, in view of the acknowledged evil in our personal experience, show reason for his belief in a Deity? Hume imagines an argument which a philosopher like Berkeley might advance. We must be more specific about our meaning of Deity. We use the term "infinity" too loosely, and abstractly. Our language savors too much of adulation. It is not a reasonable tribute to the divine Being. What Deity signifies to us is simply a Being *superlatively* great, wise, and holy. And if we suppose that God is but "finitely perfect," we can give a satisfactory account of evil, both in nature and in the will of man. For such a Being might accept a lesser evil to avoid a greater one. "And in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present." It seems rather appropriate, indeed, that Hume should put into the mouth of his Cleanthes a theory hailing from the *Timaeus*,[23] for Berkeley was much occupied, in his curious, last book, *Siris*, with ideas from the Platonic dialogues.

Cleanthes desires some criticism from Philo. If the theory is worth it, he will later put it into more complete and regular form as a system of theology.[24]

And Philo makes no mystery of his opinion. "It must, I think, be allowed, that, if a very limited intelligence, whom we shall suppose utterly unacquainted with the universe, were assured, that it were the production of a very good, wise, and powerful being, however finite, he would, from his conjectures, form *beforehand* a different notion of it from what we find it to be by experience; nor would he ever imagine, merely from these attributes of the cause, of

[23] Cf. Jowett's translation, 3rd ed., Oxford, Vol. III, pp. 467, 490.
[24] The complete formulation never takes place in the *Dialogues*. John Stuart Mill developed it in his *Three Essays on Religion*, published posthumously, which are paraphrases of the argument of Hume. They propose a "finite God." Fr. Paulsen, who translated the *Dialogues* into German, presented an entirely different version of the argument in Book One of his *Introduction to Philosophy*. Cf. J. S. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 434 and note.

which he is informed, that the effect could be so full of vice and misery and disorder, as it appears in this life. Supposing now, that this person were brought into the world, still assured, that it was the workmanship of such a sublime and benevolent Being; he might, perhaps, be surprised at the disappointment; but would never retract his former belief, if founded on any very solid argument; since such a limited intelligence must be sensible of his own blindness and ignorance, and must allow, that there may be many solutions of those phenomena, which will forever escape his comprehension. But supposing, which is the real case with regard to man, that this creature is not antecedently convinced of a supreme intelligence, benevolent, and powerful, but is left to gather such a belief from the appearances of things; this entirely alters the case, nor will he ever find any reason for such a conclusion. He may be fully convinced of the narrow limits of his understanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodness of superior powers, since he must form that inference from what he knows, not from what he is ignorant of. The more you exaggerate his weakness and ignorance, the more diffident you render him, and give him the greater suspicion, that such subjects are beyond the reach of his faculties. You are obliged, therefore, to reason with him merely from the known phenomena, and to drop every arbitrary supposition or conjecture. . . ."

"In short, I repeat the question: Is the world, considered in general, and as it appears to us in this life, different from what a man or such a limited being would, *beforehand*, expect from a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity? It must be strange prejudice to assert the contrary. And from thence I conclude, that, however consistent the world may be, allowing certain suppositions and conjectures, with the idea of such a Deity, it can never afford us an inference concerning his existence. The consistence is not absolutely denied, only the inference. Conjectures, especially where infinity is excluded from the Divine at-

tributes, may perhaps be sufficient to prove a consistence; but can never be foundations for any inference."

God is an ideal which we can never derive from our experience. Four circumstances make for evil in the world and they all strike every human mind as unnecessary, and quite avoidable by such a Deity.[25] First is the element of pain involved in the preservation of our lives. Pleasure alone might have been used to serve that purpose. But pain would have little significance in itself, were it not for the regular operation of nature according to general laws, which are not all known to man so that he cannot fare well if he tries. "Health and sickness, calm and tempest, with an infinite number of other accidents, whose causes are unknown and variable, have a great influence both on the fortunes of particular persons and on the prosperity of public societies: and indeed all human life, in a manner, depends on such accidents." Yet all such chance occurrences, as far as we are concerned, might be turned to good by a Deity conceived as a superior power and wisdom and goodness. "Some small touches, given to Caligula's brain in his infancy, might have converted him into a Trajan: one wave, a little higher than the rest, by burying Cæsar and his fortune in the bottom of the ocean, might have restored liberty to a considerable part of mankind. There may, for aught we know, be good reasons why Providence interposes not in this manner; but they are unknown to us: and though the mere supposition, that such reasons exist, may be sufficient to *save* the conclusion concerning the divine attributes, yet surely it can never be sufficient to *establish* that conclusion." But this is not all. Pain and accident would count for little, were it not for the "great frugality" of nature in regard to the powers we have for this life. "So well adjusted are the organs and capacities of all animals, and so well fitted to their preservation, that, as far as history or tradition reaches, there appears

[25] Here Hume explores the topics which Berkeley's free-thinker agreed not to urge against the dogmatist.—*Alciphron, Dialogue* 4, sec. 2.

not to be any single species, which has yet been extinguished in the universe. Every animal has the requisite endowments; but these endowments are bestowed with so scrupulous an economy, that any considerable diminution must entirely destroy the creature." For every advantage in one respect there is loss in another. Nature seems grudging, "like a *rigid master*"; not careful of the creature, like "an *indulgent parent*." But what would a man of good sense have? "In order to cure most of the ills of human life, I require not that man should have the wings of the eagle, the swiftness of the stag, the force of the ox, the arms of the lion, the scales of the crocodile or rhinoceros; much less do I demand the sagacity of an angel or cherubim. I am contented to take an encrease in one single power or faculty of his soul. Let him be endowed with a greater propensity to industry and labor; a more vigorous spring and activity of mind; a more constant bent to business and application.[26]. . . Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human life arise from idleness; and were our species, by the original constitution of their frame, exempt from this vice or infirmity, the perfect cultivation of land, the improvement of arts and manufactures, the exact execution of every office and duty, immediately follow; and men at once may fully reach that state of society, which is so imperfectly attained by the best-regulated government." But Nature is too sparing. She will just barely let man live. And the struggle is not only with things beyond man, but with his own temper, and human nature. And finally, there is the fourth circumstance, that "the great machine of nature" has its own vagaries and maladjustments.[27] All we can say of it is that "the irregularity is never, perhaps, so great as to destroy any species." But in any event it spells ruin and evil to individual beings. Such are the facts of life that we cannot ignore.

If we had "any tolerable reasons *a priori*" for the good-

[26] Hume was always conscious of his own indolence. See letter cited above, p. 21.

[27] Leibnitz admitted this fact in his *Fourth Letter* to Clarke, art. 40, pp. 111 *ff*.

ness of the Deity, we might reconcile those defects with our belief. But we can only infer such goodness from the situation we know, and the untoward circumstances are not at all *proof* of goodness, because we can criticise them, by our own finite standards, as not the kind of phenomena we think of in connection with a Being conceived to be more nearly perfect than ourselves.

"Look round this universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organised, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children!"

What shall we make of the situation? What is the meaning of it? We have four hypotheses. The ultimate causes of all things may be either absolutely good, or absolutely evil, or both good and evil, or neither good nor evil. The Manichean view of two opposite principles everywhere active in the world seems ruled out by the "uniformity and steadiness of general laws" in nature. An absolutely good or an absolutely evil principle is quite impossible in view of the mixture of good and bad familiar to us in our experience. "The true conclusion is, that the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles, and has no more regard to good above ill than to heat above cold, or to drought above moisture, or to light above heavy."

If we look to man and his conduct of life, we see a "moral evil," sometimes thought to be "more predominant above moral good than natural evil above natural good." We have even less reason, then, to think of the idea of a Providence. There is nothing here but a blind, careless Nature.

That fact of evil or vice in man himself constitutes the most serious problem for anthropomorphic theism,—as offered by Cleanthes. Evil must have some cause. The cause cannot be the original source of Nature, for that we conceive to be only Good. We are thus driven on and on without ever satisfying ourselves, unless we finally decide that the Deity is indifferent to good and evil.—But at this point Demea's piety revolts. He repudiates the entire argument of Philo. It has proved a delusion. It amounts to the subversion of all that is revered and holy.

Cleanthes has suspected his friend all the while of making game of their theological positions. But he admits that a sceptic has some justification for his sport. The reasoning of ordinary theology is not careful enough to withstand a critical examination. Some of the current views about man and his capacity to understand the Divine are so extreme that they invite just such a scepticism as Philo has expounded. These exaggerated notions of our utter incompetence to judge concerning high truth are not fitting in an age of enlightenment. They belong to times of ignorance and stupidity, and create superstition rather than religion.

But Philo taunts Cleanthes again with that strange fact which he noted at the beginning of their discussion. Those who believe in religion vary from age to age in their philosophical views. They thus seem to reach their belief by some way other than philosophy. Their arguments appear to be only a defence of their irrational belief, not the foundation of it.

"Thus Philo continued to the last his spirit of opposition, and his censure of the established opinions." Pamphilus tells us, too, that Demea is so displeased with the turn the discussion has taken that he leaves the company. Philo stays on with his friend and the young Pamphilus. The argument drops; it becomes simply a conversation between people who understand each other. It is virtually the author's own epilogue to the play, telling more plainly what it means.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Confessions of the Sceptic

PHILO is taken to task, by his friend and host, for being so very free with his tongue. His love of disputing and his hatred of all superstition have made him too reckless in his scepticism, sparing nothing in the argument, not even what he himself recognises to be worthy of reverence.

"I must confess, replied Philo, that I am less cautious on the subject of natural religion than on any other; both because I know that I can never, on that head, corrupt the principles of any man of common sense, and because no one, I am confident, in whose eyes I appear a man of common sense, will ever mistake my intentions. You, in particular, Cleanthes, with whom I live in unreserved intimacy; you are sensible, that, notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature. A purpose, an intention, a design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it. *That Nature does nothing in vain*, is a maxim established in all the schools, merely from the contemplation of the works of Nature, without any religious purpose; and, from a firm conviction of its truth, an anatomist, who had observed a new organ or canal, would never be satisfied, till he had also discovered its use and intention. One great foundation of the Copernican system is the maxim, *That Nature acts by the simplest methods, and chooses the most proper means to any end;* and astronomers often, without thinking of it, lay this strong foundation of piety and religion.[1]

[1] Cf. Newton, *Principia* (*Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy*): Rule One, *op. cit.*, p. 160: "For Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes."

The same thing is observable in other parts of philosophy: and thus all the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent Author; and their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess that intention."

As we have seen on many previous occasions, Philo is a genuine lover of science. He tells, now, of his pleasure in listening to the argument of Galen concerning the structure of the human body. He recalls, too, the newer studies in physiology. They all present us with most "striking appearances." Implicitly we recognise, in such economy of Nature, the reality of a God.

Now for the first time, too, Philo actually speaks of God, and not simply of abstract Deity. He addresses himself to some imaginary sceptic who will obstinately see no meaning in the nature disclosed to us by science. "Supposing there were a God, who did not discover himself immediately to our senses; were it possible for him to give stronger proofs of his existence, than what appear on the whole face of Nature? What indeed could such a divine Being do, but copy the present economy of things; render many of his artifices so plain, that no stupidity could mistake them; afford glimpses of still greater artifices, which demonstrate his prodigious superiority above our narrow apprehensions; and conceal altogether a great many from such imperfect creatures? Now according to all rules of just reasoning, every fact must pass for undisputed, when it is supported by all the arguments, which its nature admits of;[2] even though these arguments be not, in themselves, very numerous or forcible: how much more, in the present case, where no human imagination can compute their number, and no understanding estimate their cogency!"

[2] Cf. Newton, *op. cit.*, Rule Four, p. 162: "In experimental philosophy we are to look upon propositions collected by general induction from phenomena as accurately or very nearly true, notwithstanding any contrary hypotheses that may be imagined, till such time as other phenomena occur, by which they may either be made more accurate, or liable to exceptions."

This explains Hume's final attitude toward religion. We must not prescribe what can be known about any topic by adhering too rigidly to one special type of knowledge as a standard. The method of our thinking is relative, at all times, to the nature of our subject-matter. As Philo pointed out, in Part Nine, we cannot demonstrate the existence of God by *abstract* reasoning, because such demonstration is appropriate only to the kind of reality we call number, or quantity. The whole preceding discussion has taken place, therefore, on the assumption that the existence and nature of God must be determined by argument like that for any matter of fact. And Philo has won his laurels here, too, in showing that the *scientific* method of argument, such as Copernicus or Galileo followed in establishing the new theory of astronomy, applies only to realities within time and space, and that causal reasoning is not literally valid in discussing the origin, not of worlds, but of Nature as a whole. But one point had troubled Philo in the quiet insistence of his intimate friend Cleanthes. It was the assertion that mankind is still bound to think, or infer, a purposive being as the meaning of the universe. Whatever be its defects in logic or method, this *natural judgment* holds. Though it is not comparable, for accuracy or truth, with the verified conclusions of natural science and the demonstrations of mathematics, still, it is a thought appropriate to the situation. It is not the product of stupidity or perversity. It cannot be conceived save by persons who have sufficient intelligence to know that what they contemplate is a regular and uniform Nature, amenable to our understanding in terms of cause and effect and the other principles of the human mind. Thus Philo himself acknowledges that such a religious conception is suited to the subject-matter. It is implied in the very maxims of our detailed, scientific processes of thought themselves. Hence it is entirely reasonable to confess explicitly, and definitely, the reality of God.

Then Cleanthes testifies to his own form of belief.

Theism is the most satisfactory view. "It is the only system of cosmogony, which can be rendered intelligible and complete, and yet can throughout preserve a strong analogy to what we every day see and experience in the world. The comparison of the universe to a machine of human contrivance is so obvious and natural, and is justified by so many instances of order and design in Nature, that it must immediately strike all unprejudiced apprehensions, and procure universal approbation. Whoever attempts to weaken this theory, cannot pretend to succeed by establishing in its place any other, that is precise and determinate: it is sufficient for him, if he start doubts and difficulties; and by remote and abstract views of things, reach that suspense of judgment, which is here the utmost boundary of his wishes. But besides, that this state of mind is in itself unsatisfactory, it can never be steadily maintained against such striking appearances, as continually engage us into the religious hypothesis. A false, absurd system, human nature, from the force of prejudice, is capable of adhering to, with obstinacy and perseverance: but no system at all, in opposition to theory, supported by strong and obvious reason, by natural propensity, and by early education, I think it absolutely impossible to maintain or defend."

And this Philo endorses. The most an opponent of theism can do is not to prove the alternative system of naturalism, but only to harass, with certain problems of logic and method, the mind of one who already believes theism, driving him into the condition of suspended judgment. But such a sceptical attitude is not enduring. It cannot be sustained by reason. There is no *motive* for holding it, save the "spirit of opposition" and contention, which would itself disappear were our original position actually to break down, and all belief whatsoever to depart from our minds. So it is not really possible to withhold judgment.

Philo suspects, therefore, that a more real agreement

exists between the philosophical dogmatist and the philosophical sceptic than either of them appreciates. The seemingly radical difference is in the way in which they express their common thought. "That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art is evident: and according to all the rules of good reasoning, we ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their causes have a proportional analogy. But as there are also considerable differences, we have reason to suppose a proportional difference in the causes; and in particular ought to attribute a much higher degree of power and energy to the supreme cause than any we have ever observed in mankind. Here then the existence of a Deity is plainly ascertained by reason; and if we make it a question whether, on account of these analogies, we can properly call him a *mind* or *intelligence*, notwithstanding the vast difference, which may reasonably be supposed between him and human minds; what is this but a mere verbal controversy? No man can deny the analogies between the effects: to restrain ourselves from enquiring concerning the causes is scarcely possible: from this enquiry, the legitimate conclusion is, that the causes have also an analogy: and if we are not contented with calling the first and supreme cause a God or Deity, but desire to vary the expression; what can we call him but Mind or Thought, to which he is justly supposed to bear a considerable resemblance? . . . That the dispute concerning Theism is of this nature, and consequently is merely verbal, or perhaps, if possible, still more incurably ambiguous, will appear upon the slightest enquiry. I ask the theist, if he does not allow, that there is a great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible, difference between the *human* and the *divine* mind: the more pious he is, the more readily will he assent to the affirmative, and the more will he be disposed to magnify the difference: he will even assert, that the difference is of a nature which cannot be too much magnified. I next turn to the atheist, who, I assert, is only nominally so, and can

never possibly be in earnest;[3] and I ask him, whether, from the coherence and apparent sympathy in all the parts of this world, there be not a certain degree of analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every situation and in every age; whether the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the structure of human thought be not energies that probably bear some remote analogy to each other: it is impossible he can deny it: he will readily acknowledge it. Having obtained this concession, I push him still farther in his retreat; and I ask him, if it be not probable, that the principle which first arranged, and still maintains order in this universe, bears not also some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of Nature, and among the rest to the economy of human mind and thought. However reluctant, he must give his assent. Where then, cry I to both these antagonists, is the subject of your dispute? The theist allows, that the original intelligence is very different from human reason: the atheist allows, that the original principle of order bears some remote analogy to it." Indeed, the disputants may easily be conceived to change sides, the theist coming to exaggerate the dissimilarity between the supreme being and mere man, whilst the supposed atheist "magnifies the analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every period, every situation, every position." The controversy is largely one of words, not meaning.

But the question of greatest significance is whether the philosophers will agree in conceiving of God as a Providence. Here Philo has wrought havoc with his criticism. "And here I must also acknowledge, Cleanthes, that, as the works of Nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of *our* art and contrivance, than to those of *our* benevolence and justice; we have reason to infer that the

[3] Cf. Bayle, *Continuation*, etc., Vol. III, art. xxxvi, p. 239. In his early notebook Hume spoke of the naturalistic view as "Strato's atheism." He seems, at a later date, not to have taken seriously the avowed atheism of the French writers whom he visited in Paris. Cf. Burton, Vol. II, p. 220.

natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of man, than his moral have to human virtues. But what is the consequence? Nothing but this, that the moral qualities of man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities. For, as the Supreme Being is allowed to be absolutely and entirely perfect, whatever differs most from him departs the farthest from the supreme standard of rectitude and perfection. These, Cleanthes, are my unfeigned sentiments on this subject; and these sentiments, you know, I have ever cherished and maintained."

When Hume was a young man he was much impressed by the form of the ontological argument in Cartesian philosophy,—the idea of a Perfect Being revealed to man in the consciousness of his own limitations in wisdom and goodness.[4] At the time when he was working toward his great discovery, he undertook to perfect his own character, smitten with the representations of the ideal human life in the moralists of antiquity.[5] Later, he wrote an essay, *Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*, in which he said: "Among the other excellencies of man, this is one, that he can form an idea of perfections much beyond what he has experience of in himself; and is not limited in his conception of wisdom and virtue."[6] Even the pessimism of Philo in the latter parts of the *Dialogues* is not unrelieved: Philo himself speaks of the ideal of a Perfect or Good Being as a notion we might have "beforehand," instead of deriving it from experience. Now this is very close to the *a priori*. It is not far from the thought expressed in the orthodox teaching about "original sin," that the imperfection of man is not so much in his physical and intelligent nature as in his moral will. In this respect man is farthest

[4] On Hume's sincerity, see Compayré, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3; Cucheval-Clarigny, *op. cit.*, p. 115; A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *op. cit.*, p. 15; O. Quast, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
[5] See above, p. 21.
[6] *Essays*, Vol. I, p. 153.

removed from his own ideals. Thus, if God already exists for us, as something real in the way our intelligence and mind are real, God must be conceived real in his perfection only by *radical contrast* with *our* purpose and goodness. This seems to be Hume's meaning.

And to make it more personal he discards the fiction of "Pamphilus," and speaks directly to us in a footnote. The dogmatist and the sceptic differ only in their language, or, at any rate, only in their private estimate of the amount of assurance or doubt in reasoning. It is a difference pervading all their thought. Every philosophical dogmatist admits difficulties with regard to all knowledge,—even science itself,—difficulties absolutely beyond a logical resolution. Yet every philosophical sceptic confesses, for his part, the absolute necessity of believing and thinking and reasoning to some conclusion on every sort of subject. The particular emphasis of each thinker depends, ultimately, upon temperament, habit, and even whim. A Cleanthes will insist upon the necessity of belief; a Philo upon the necessity of being strictly rational—each acting according to type. Hume is virtually saying, then, that he himself has been disposed, now to the one, and again to the other. He is conveying to us what he revealed to his friend Elliot: the persistent struggle of these interests within his own nature, of which these *Dialogues* are but the dramatisation.

Still, we have not yet reached a conclusion. There remains a conversation which will take us more deeply into the personal motives of this long conflict. Hume discovers himself to us by making these two characters tell of their peculiar attitudes toward religion as it exists among the common people and in history. The author steps behind the scenes—we hear Philo speaking again, and Cleanthes.

The more deeply Philo feels the sentiment of veneration for the Perfect Being of religion, the more does he abhor popular superstition. He takes pleasure in pushing or-

dinary notions to their utterly absurd conclusions. He so hates bigotry that he will actually run into impiety.

"My inclination, replied Cleanthes, lies, I own, a contrary way. Religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all. The doctrine of a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it." If men are influenced by rewards and punishments of a finite nature, they will be greatly affected for better by those that bear the mark of infinity. So speaks the moralist.

But Philo is the historical scientist. The affairs of humanity show no evidence of a progress in virtue of the popular religion. The religious spirit seems to bring the most vicious things in man's social existence,—faction, war, persecution, subversion of established governments, oppression, and slavery.

Cleanthes replies, in a passage which Hume wrote originally as a preface to the second volume of his *History of England* because of the bitterness and prejudice created by the first volume:[7] "The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanise their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience;[8] and as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition."

To Philo every popular religion is inevitably of that vicious sort. He claims to have the "facts." The pretence

[7] The original form of this preface is given in Burton, Vol. II, pp. 11-12. Hume had studied the moral and political aspects of the institution of religion in his *Natural History of Religion*, and he had accumulated enough material, besides, to contemplate the writing of an *Ecclesiastical History*.—*Ibid.*, p. 130.

[8] Cf. Montaigne, *Apologie*, etc.: "Nostre religion est faicte pour extirper les vices: elle les couvre, les nourrit, les incite."

that we must have a definite promise of a future life in order to induce mankind to be moral is founded on reasoning which is contradicted every day by the very practice of divines. They declaim continually against the insensibility of men to the infinite goods and evils. It is obvious, then, how little men are influenced by such ideas. "It is certain, from experience, that the smallest grain of natural honesty and benevolence has more effect on men's conduct, than the most pompous views suggested by theological theories and systems. A man's natural inclination works incessantly upon him; it is forever present to the mind, and mingles itself with every view and consideration: whereas religious motives, where they act at all, operate only by starts and bounds; and it is scarcely possible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind."[9] Inclination wins over to itself the intelligence of man. So equipped it always outwits every religious scruple. And this is so well recognised, that men will never trust those who make a great show of being very scrupulous and pious. The true forces for morality are thus independent of religious belief. And wherever religion is actually a predominant influence it either opposes or weakens the moral life. The philosophers who form elevated ideals of the divine are those who do not need an external restraint upon their conduct. Those who might benefit by it cannot do so because of their low conception of the power and purposes of the Deity. When they become religious they perpetrate the most atrocious deeds under cover of devotion. Even when their enthusiasm or superstition does not go so far, it still serves to divert their minds from the ordinary sanctions of conduct, and to fasten their attention upon some new and quite meaningless kind of merit which they may hope to attain by useless rites. To this end they work themselves up in their devotions. They acquire the habit of dissimulation. Their "steady attention alone to so important an interest

[9] Cf. Bayle, *Éclaircissement sur les Athées*, art. 1.

as that of eternal salvation is apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness." Hence the wise statesman who is obliged to have dealings with popular religion only tries to make "a saving game of it," so far as society is concerned, by dissociating the authority of the government from that of the ecclesiastical institution. He practices toleration. But even then he finds "nothing but endless disputes, quarrels, factions, persecutions, and civil commotions." These are the facts which Hume cannot forget in his scrutiny of religion as a phenomenon of human nature.

"True religion, I allow, has no such pernicious consequences: but we must treat of religion, as it has commonly been found in the world; nor have I anything to do with that speculative tenet of theism, which, as it is a species of philosophy, must partake of the beneficial influence of that principle, and at the same time must lie under a like inconvenience, of being always confined to very few persons."

It follows, therefore, that honesty has its foundation in the public interest, not in religious belief. Oaths in court are not significant because they invoke the name of the Deity. The importance and solemnity of the occasion under which they are taken gives them their authority over men, and makes them effectual in the eliciting of the truth. Many instances appear in history of the bad faith of those who have professed the greatest piety. There seems to be a most striking coincidence of immorality with the attitude of fanaticism.

"Take care, Philo, replied Cleanthes, take care; push not matters too far: allow not your zeal against false religion to undermine your veneration for the true. Forfeit not this principle, the chief, the only great comfort in life; and our principal support amidst all the attacks of adverse fortune. The most agreeable reflection, which it is possible for human imagination to suggest, is that of genuine theism,

which represents us as the workmanship of a Being perfectly good, wise, and powerful; who created us for happiness, and who, having implanted in us immeasurable desires of good, will prolong our existence to all eternity, and will transfer us into an infinite variety of scenes, in order to satisfy those desires, and render our felicity complete and durable."

These views, Philo admits, are alluring. But here again he sees what generally prevails, rather than what the philosopher cherishes. The "terrors" of religion are more apparent than its "comforts." Devotion comes when men are in grief, sickness, and sorrow, not with the joy of life. The imagery of such a depressed frame of mind is appropriate to the humiliation which men feel. The Deity is most high and perfect. And yet so weak is the mind in this pass that it naturally concludes, despite such a tribute to the Supreme Power, that the damned are infinitely greater in number than the elect. No popular religion has ever depicted the life hereafter in any form which mankind would choose as its ideal. And those "fine models of religion are the mere product of philosophy."

Nevertheless, Philo will not be dogmatic in his historical judgment. "It is true; both fear and hope enter into religion; because both these passions, at different times, agitate the human mind, and each of them forms a species of divinity, suitable to itself.[10]. . . But still it must be acknowledged, that, as terror is the primary principle of religion, it is the passion, which always predominates in it, and admits but of short intervals of pleasure."

Even the joy of religion is exorbitant, exhausting the spirit of man and preparing the way for subsequent depression and fear. It is not like the condition of happiness, "calm and equable." Nor can any person achieve such serenity when he fancies himself "in such profound darkness and uncertainty, between an eternity of happiness and

[10] In the *Natural History of Religion* Hume speaks of fear and hope as the essential motives of all religion. *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 315 *f*, 318-9.

an eternity of misery." This throws human nature awry. It makes, inevitably, for the characteristic melancholy and gloom of devout people.

There is something absurd and inconsistent, too, in these overwhelming apprehensions of evil. They imply a Deity with human passions, and especially the passion we do not value much in ourselves, an insatiable desire for praise. And if the Deity has one such passion he might well have another equally great, an indifference to these creatures so infinitely beneath him. God would then be no other than careless Nature.

"*To know God*, says Seneca, *is to worship him*. All other worship is indeed absurd, superstitious, and even impious." Anything distinct from such acknowledgment of God will degrade Him. The first objects of His wrath, were He disposed to direct it against the vices and foolishness of men, would be the devotees of popular superstition. Only a few would merit His favor, the philosophical theists, "who entertain, or rather indeed endeavor to entertain, suitable notions of His divine perfections." Those entitled to His compassion and indulgence would be the philosophical sceptics, "a sect almost equally rare, who, from a natural diffidence of their own capacity, suspend, or endeavor to suspend all judgment with regard to such sublime and such extraordinary subjects."

One thing is clear from these confessions. Hume doubts the value of human institutions as agencies for the expression of religious ideas, and for the betterment of human morality. His studies in the "natural history" of religion made him wish to escape into the calm of philosophy. His investigations in history, in the political, economic, and moral aspects of human life, confirmed in him this attitude. And what has he found, in the quiet examination of philosophy? The answer is: no explicit "natural theology" in the sense of a definite, stable science of the Deity and his relations to man.

"If the whole of Natural Theology, as some people

seem to maintain,[11] resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined proposition: *That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence*: if this proposition be not capable of extension, variation, or more particular explication: if it affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance: and if the analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried no farther than to the human intelligence; and cannot be transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the qualities of the mind: if this really be the case, what can the most inquisitive, contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain, philosophical assent to the proposition, as often as it occurs; and believe that the arguments, on which it is established, exceed the objections, which lie against it? Some astonishment indeed will naturally arise from the greatness of the object: some melancholy from its obscurity: some contempt of human reason, that it can give no solution more satisfactory with regard to so extraordinary and magnificent a question. But believe me, Cleanthes, the most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation, that heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate this profound ignorance, by afford-

[11] Hume seems to have in mind the "deists." But this *interpretation* of a deistic formula in no way commits him to the deistic attitude in general. There was supposed to be a natural religion discoverable by reason at all times. This existed in primitive peoples. The vast complications of doctrine and worship found in the actual institutions were the work of priests,—"artifice," not "nature." So it behooved enlightened men to strip off these unessential additions and republish the original gospel so clearly seen in the simplicity of the days of yore. To this deism Hume's *Natural History of Religion* put an end, once and for all. The original religion known to us in history is polytheism. When theism appears, it comes not by way of reason, but through the operation of motives of fear and hope. The complexity blamed upon artful priests and politicians is really due to our own human nature, and is inevitable from the nature of our interests. In short, we are not to confuse religion with a philosophy of religion. Its actual historical form is essential to it.—Cf. *Essays, The Sceptic*, Vol. I, p. 220. Thus Hume insists upon judging the worth of religious belief by its total effect upon the welfare of man in society. But he makes no final decision on this matter in the *Dialogues*.

ing some particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our faith. A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: while the haughty dogmatist, persuaded, that he can erect a complete system of theology by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor. To be a philosophical sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian; a proposition, which I would willingly recommend to the attention of Pamphilus: and I hope Cleanthes will forgive me for interposing so far in the education and instruction of his pupil."[12]

And what has Pamphilus learned? There is something admirably intelligible in the universe, like that being which we personally know in ourselves. Precisely what that Being is we cannot say, except that it is like human intelligence. We have no ground, in the light of this truth, for acting other than we naturally do under the inspiration of our common ideals of morality. We should not imagine a Being who is moved by what moves us, and whom we must worship in ways that would humanly please us. Understanding this truth, then, with all these qualifications, we have no choice but to accept it, believing "that the arguments on which it is established, exceed the objections, which lie against it,"—that is, believing while conscious of difficulties which will ever remain for our reason. To appreciate these difficulties we must become, first of all, philosophical sceptics. Besides the intellectual preparation, we shall gain, too, an emotional one, through the feelings of astonishment, melancholy, and self-contempt. In humility we shall be made ready for light from any

[12] Cf. Bayle, *Éclaircissement sur les Pyrrhoniens*, art. 8: "the force of the philosophical objections must be known;"—and article on *Pyrrhon*, with note 25; Montaigne, *Apologie*, etc., speaks of scepticism, too, as leaving the mind free, "une charte blanche, preparée à prendre du doigt de Dieu telles formes qu'il lui plaire d'y gravir."

source. We shall not be over-proud of our glorious faculty of reason, and seek to reduce all things to the forms within its ken. Here is the first step toward a reasonable attitude. And when the youth Pamphilus grows up, disciplined in this scepticism, he will believe.

Now "Pamphilus" has reached the prime of life and is reflecting upon the problems that have so long occupied his mind. "And as nothing ever made greater impression on me, than all the reasonings of that day; so I confess, that, upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think, that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth."

The contention of Philo has been that reason must be wholly satisfied before we accept or reject any view on this subject of all life and all nature. But Cleanthes has insisted upon the absolute necessity of a belief and of definite opinions about the meaning of the Whole. Philo upholds the claims of reason; Cleanthes the fuller necessity of that human nature which includes, in addition to reason, the hopes and fears of mankind.

The term "principles" is, however, somewhat ambiguous. It may refer, also, to the fundamental ways of reasoning about religion. Demea typifies the philosopher of the seventeenth century, devoted to abstract demonstrations. Philo represents the man of science, tending to limit his views to whatsoever measures up to the method of the established forms of natural knowledge, and sceptical when he meets opinions that fall short of his criterion of truth. Cleanthes speaks for those who eschew proof in either of those senses, but who claim, nevertheless, to have a reasonable faith based upon human experience.

We might even say, then, that Hume chooses the principles of theism, in preference to those of naturalism. Philo has put forward the hypothesis of naturalism, which is better than Demea's mysticism, and he has made it plausible; Cleanthes presents theism, and it is frankly an anthropomorphic theism. The last is still nearer the truth.

But it must be understood in the light of all the criticism directed at it by the sceptic: it is then a dogmatism rendered *philosophical*, which differs nowise, in its essentials, from a *philosophical* scepticism.

There is no reason to doubt that this was the sincere expression of Hume's final opinion. The entire concluding Part of the *Dialogues* is in the tone of a confession of faith. And the work itself, we may properly recall at this place, was to be issued to the world only after the death of the author, who would then have nothing to gain or fear from man's suffrage or displeasure. It was bequeathed to posterity, along with an *Autobiography*. Together they form a personal revelation of Hume, who was really known to but a very few intimate friends. "Though I throw out my speculations to entertain the learned and metaphysical world, yet, in other things, I do not think so differently from the rest of the world as you imagine."[13]

[13] Burton, Vol. I, p. 294, quoted from the memoirs of Dr. Carlyle, a clergyman of the Scottish church, and friend of Hume. It is Hume's reply, on the occasion of his mother's death, to a certain Mr. Boyle who had taken it upon himself to explain to the philosopher that his "uncommon grief," at such a time, was really due to his lack of religious belief.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

David Hume in Retrospect

A FEW months after Hume's death Adam Smith wrote a letter to William Strahan telling of the last days of their friend. Hume was serene and cheerful. He had been reading Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, and he told fancifully of the pleas he himself might make to the ferryman of the Styx. "'I could not well imagine, what excuse I could make to Charon in order to obtain a little delay. I have done everything of consequence which I ever meant to do; and I could at no time expect to leave my relations and friends in a better situation than that in which I am now likely to leave them. I therefore have all reason to die contented.' He then diverted himself with inventing several jocular excuses, which he supposed he might make to Charon, and with imagining the very surly answers which it might suit the character of Charon to return to them. 'Upon further consideration,' said he, 'I thought I might say to him: Good Charon, I have been correcting my works for a new edition. Allow me a little time, that I may see how the public receives the alterations. But Charon would answer: When you have seen the effect of these, you will be for making other alterations. There will be no end of such excuses; so, honest friend, please step into the boat. But I might still urge: Have a little patience, good Charon; I have been endeavoring to open the eyes of the public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition. But Charon would then lose all temper and decency: You loitering rogue, that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy, loitering rogue.'"[1]

[1] Burton, Vol. II, pp. 511-2; Hill, *Letters*, pp. xxxvi-vii.

It was a Dr. Cullen who attended Hume. He wrote to another physician: "You desire an account of Mr. Hume's last days, and I give it you with some pleasure; for, though I could not look upon him in his illness without much concern, yet the tranquillity and pleasantry which he constantly discovered did, even then, give me satisfaction; and, now that the curtain is dropped, allows me indulge the less alloyed reflection. It was truly an example, 'des grands hommes qui sont morts en plaisantant;' and to me, who have been so often shocked with the horrors of the superstitious on such occasions, the reflection on such a death is truly agreeable." There follow some instances of his good cheer, in the midst of suffering and a certain knowledge of what was coming to pass. He showed a great solicitude for his friends and entertained them, to make them feel easier. "These are a few particulars, which may perhaps appear trifling, but to me no particulars seem trifling that relate to so great a man. It is perhaps from trifles that we can best distinguish the tranquillity and cheerfulness of the philosopher, at a time when the most part of mankind are under disquiet, anxiety, and sometimes even horror. I consider the sacrifice of the cock as a more certain evidence of the tranquillity of Socrates, than his discourse on immortality."[2]

So Hume entered the noble company of the dead. In the end he was content. "I have done every thing of consequence which I ever meant to do." He could only hope to improve his work, as a philosopher, by making indefinite correction. He had aimed to open the eyes of the public to things which were dark to them, but he knew that the light could not dawn "these many hundred years."

It is now almost two centuries since Hume made his discovery about causal reasoning. For a long time his achievement has been valued, at best, as the effectual criticism of an old metaphysic. But times have changed. The

[2] Burton, Vol. II, pp. 516-7; cited from Thomson's *Life of Cullen*, p. 607. Cf. also Hill, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

idealism inspired by the response of Kant is itself going the way of all flesh. There are new and live doctrines of a constructive nature, called pragmatism, experimentalism, humanism, or realism. By some these are all comprised under the rubric of naturalism. And while these very points of view were developing, in the latter nineteenth century, there was an increasing interest in the writings of Hume, especially in the *Dialogues*.[3] They were then translated anew into various other languages. And it is now becoming evident that this naturalistic tendency in recent thought is not without a mighty forbear in the past. For we have such titles as *The Naturalism of Hume*.[4] In a book on *Idealism and the Modern Age*, we find "the Humean insight" thought worthy to be placed alongside of "the Socratic insight" and regarded as the source of the modern opinions against which an idealism today must define itself.[5] All this has come to pass with a genuine appreciation of the thought in those *Dialogues*. It seems as if the book is accomplishing the mission Hume intended when he bequeathed it to posterity.

The *Dialogues* reveal the early progress of Hume's thought. As a youth he took an interest in literature as well as in philosophy, and was widely read in the languages. He considered very seriously everything that had a bearing upon human nature, including, of course, religion. Here he shared the common opinion. But he had, too, an

[3] J. S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion;* Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. VI; *The English Utilitarians*, Putnam, New York, Vol. III, p. 437 n; A. J. Balfour, *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt; The Foundations of Belief; Theism and Humanism*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1915, pp. 167-170; Cusheval-Clarigny, *op. cit.*, *Revue de Deux Mondes*, Vol. VI, 1856, pp. 115, 139; G. Compayré *op. cit.*, pp. 318 *ff.*; A. Espinas, *op. cit.*, *Revue Philosophique*, 1886, Vol. XII, pp. 137-50; A. Meinong, *op. cit.*; E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, Halle, 1913, 2nd ed. rev., p. 207; R. Richter, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 307, 421-2; A. Riehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-9; A. Thomsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 *f*, 142; H. Hasse, *Das Problem der Gültigkeit in der Philosophie D. Humes*, Munich, 1920, pp. 174 *f*.

[4] Norman Smith, *Mind*, N.S., Vol. XIV, 1905.

[5] G. P. Adams, Yale University Press, 1919, pp. 229-30. Cf. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *op. cit.*, Lecture One.

intellectual restlessness which never let him be content with the forms in which philosophers had given expression to their religious beliefs. The struggle went on in his mind for a time, when there dawned upon him a new and quite decisive objection to all reasoning intended to prove the existence of a God. Every demonstration rested upon the maxim of cause and effect. The theism of Berkeley, reviving the Stoic position of Cicero, stood upon the absolute necessity of a cause for all that exists as we know it. This implied a necessary connection. Yet it was obviously not so—Strato, in antiquity, and some modern philosophers had suggested the possibility of Nature being self-ordered, without receiving its arrangement from a Being distinct from itself,—a God. And this is precisely the way in which Hume represents the course of his thought in the *Dialogues*: after we have explored the hypothesis of theism, and then the various hypotheses defining a naturalism, we come to the argument which is "entirely decisive" against any demonstration of the Deity. There is no logical necessity of a cause for every event. No matter of fact can be demonstrated to exist, because the contrary of every such existence is entirely conceivable. The Universe may be self-organising like the animate beings with which we are familiar: it need not have a cause for this order, in some Being beyond Nature invested with the attributes of a human being. That this could be so in the present instance throws the whole maxim of causal reasoning in doubt. And this is the discovery which made Hume a philosopher before he had even had time to learn the art of self-expression.

He investigated the human understanding in its many different activities, to see if there were anything else like the presumption he had found in this case of reasoning in terms of cause and effect. The sceptics were full of such notions. From Francis Bacon and Montaigne he learned much. But most of all he discovered in Thomas Hobbes and Father Malebranche very subtle and comprehensive

studies of Human Nature, showing the agency of imagination in making us look for causes and effects, and presume upon a regularity in nature beyond our evidence, and thus conceive of forces and an external reality and even our own personality, as if they were delivered to us in sense perception. Among his British predecessors he saw Locke and Berkeley challenging the "idea" of substance or matter, and that of absolute space and time. These were abstractions, or "abstract ideas" in a spurious sense. This prepared him for the disclosure that the *necessity* of the connection of a cause and its effect was not really discernible in the form of an "idea." We have no insight into the productive relation. Cause, force, power, or necessity is ever an opaque thing to our minds. It is not, therefore, the clear ground from which we make an inference, but simply the reflection of our human propensity to connect and unite distinct objects with each other. It is the feeling of our impulsive and determinate imagination. We confuse such accompanying determination of our mind with the object that presents itself to us. The necessity exists, but it is only our human appreciation of the objective world, and not a datum in it.

Other phenomena analogous to this are found in our belief in the existence of an external world. The "outness" of our world is not given us in any sensation, or in any separate feeling or perception. Is there, then, no material world, as Berkeley intimated? Yes, Hume replies,—believing with the common people that there is still some meaning in the notion of an independent world of permanent objects. This belief, then, has to be explained. It cannot be dissolved into the theism of Berkeley. It rests upon a certain kind of evidence, the constancy and coherence of some of our perceptions. These features induce us to attribute an "identity" to what we perceive, even though it is not always the same in our perception. They make us connect various appearances and envisage them as "the same thing." And thus we cannot prevent our-

selves from conceiving of an objective order, existences related to each other in time and space, and perceived by us only from time to time, and in this or that particular place. Such appreciation of the objective aspect of reality is exactly analogous to that of its causal connection.

But one more great and persistent belief of mankind remains. We believe that we are persons enduring amidst all the changes of our perception, and we even think of our personal identity as extending beyond the time and space of our perception, as Locke and Bishop Butler had pointed out. What is this Self? We can have no "idea" of it, even on Berkeley's view, for the Self meant to him the active thinking being, not the idea which is thought. And those who pretend to identify their Selves with some particular perception always find themselves unable to point it out to others. Yet nothing is more real to us than our own individual person. And Hume had studied the phenomena of sympathy, delving into the writings not only of Butler, Shaftesbury, and Malebranche, but also of Aristotle, Cicero, and other ancient thinkers. In love and friendship the person of another is intimated to us along with the consciousness of ourselves. Even the "passions" characteristic of man imply some sense of what it is to be a person: pride and humility are feelings prompted by outward objects, but centering our attention upon "ourselves"; love and hate direct our thought upon "other persons." The ethical life, too, would be utterly without meaning, were not the persons real, for whom acts or goods are "useful" and agreeable, or else evil and painful. Not even religion could exist without this belief in personality. And Hume sets out ambitiously to account for it. He finds that the reciprocal relations of all the perceptions which constitute our mind induce us to conceive of a being that persists through all the changes, a being identical with itself despite the variety of our perceptions,—identical in the same way a commonwealth is in the life of a society of conscious individuals. This idea of our own person is

an appreciation without which human nature could not subsist. It is dictated by nature itself, like the beliefs in causes and in the reality of an objective world.

Accompanying these realistic inquiries into the evidence for our common-sense beliefs is a constructive view of the imagination. We have long been wont to regard a philosopher's appeal to imagination as a *pis-aller*. Imagination seems the dumping-ground of all that is spurious in our pretended knowledge. When sense and reason fail to show warrant for the necessity we suppose in the connection of things, for the objectivity of what is real, and for the internal reality of ourselves, we attribute these suppositions to the only function of mind which can possibly be their source, the fancy, or imagination. But imagination need not be impugned on that account. Even the seventeenth century philosophers who set so much store by reason did not regard the imagination with contempt: they saw a practical value in its presumptuous thoughts. Thus Malebranche ascribed to this activity of mind a certain touch of the "spiritual"—it was mind animated with the idea of the Infinite and Perfect, impelled to see more simplicity and unity in things than was really there: thus making Nature represent God. In his view this was, of course, a hopeless project of the mind. It would never achieve what intellect alone can attain. But still this imagination worked according to a certain principle which made it significant, the principle of assimilation, of taking in things through their resemblances, and of seeing all novelty in terms of the habitual. And Hobbes, too, a rationalist, leaning toward materialism, made the same point about the imagination. Thus Hume saw in the diverse phenomena of the human understanding a general type of mental activity that took place according to definite principles. He conceived the imagination to have a "nature." It seemed important enough to supplant reason, as the source of all our primary beliefs.

We cannot ask why imagination works in this regular

manner. That is simply what Human Nature means in the argument. It has ways of its own, not to be reduced to those of the physical nature which we study in physiology and physics. Its law is distinct from the law of matter. The operation is, however, like that of gravitation in physical bodies, regular and uniform, capable of being described in terms of law, and suggesting a rationale,—but not yet understood in its innermost being. For power, force, agency, or necessity in all its forms is ever mysterious to man.

There is, then, a phase of constructive philosophy in the book on the Human Understanding. Beliefs whose foundation cannot be reason, in the strict sense, are nevertheless the product of "nature," that is, of operations in the mind as regular and constant as those of gravitation in the physical world. These are identified with the imagination because they are not properly acts of reasoning. But it is not the working of the imagination alone which brings about our typical views of the world in which we live and move. The imagination works with the materials afforded by experience. It is only because events do repeat themselves in some way, and because objects are constantly conjoined, that we assimilate them and acquire definite habits of causal inference. Our mental customs are dispositions engendered by the working together of human nature with the nature which is beyond ourselves but of which we are still an integral part. Thus our prevailing beliefs are not fictions, despite the fact that they are "made" by the mind. They work well, too, and are indispensable for life. Hume goes even so far as to say that the conclusions derived from our employment of the maxim of cause and effect are entitled to be called "proofs"; distinct, at once, from logical demonstrations and from mere probabilities.

Thus it is apparent that Hume believed he had furnished a guarantee for empirical science. His own book was itself a venture in applying the "experimental meth-

od" of Newton to the mental world. His hypothesis concerning a "natural" imagination was established, in his own opinion, not only by this study of the understanding, but also by subsequent investigations into the working of the mind in feeling and conduct. The *Treatise* purported to be a definite contribution to the new "science of man." His other works proceeded also on the assumption that a genuine knowledge of matters of fact in the realm of experience is possible. He believed politics and economics could be made sciences. He regarded history and ethics as subjects for the same kind of study as physical nature. Indeed, his discovery about causal necessity seems to have been a veritable liberation for him. For he did not become a sceptic straightway. He told Dr. Cheyne that he saw stretching out before him new prospects of learning. For his disclosure of the sheer unintelligibility of necessity, power, or force freed him from the straitening view that no study was scientific unless it dealt with forces, as in physics. He found the "true meaning" of cause to be this: the regular and uniform antecedent of a certain distinct type of event in our experience. Knowledge is thus the conception of invariable relations for events that are varied in their appearance. Hence, whenever we achieve the formulation of any constant factors in a set of phenomena, we have a causal law, or genuine knowledge of the facts. This Hume himself claimed for his own science of man. He was actually revealing the nature of man through his presentation of the general principles of the understanding and affections and moral life of human beings. The same sort of law was attainable in history, politics, and economics—that is, in all the sciences which have some bearing on the science of man. And so, although Hume destroyed the old theology and metaphysics, by his question concerning the ground of causal reasoning, he constructed a "new medium of truth," justifying a faith in the very sciences which he himself could advance, and

which the coming nineteenth century was to place alongside the sciences of external nature.[6]

Why, then, did Hume ever become a sceptic? At what point in his career did this happen? It might seem as if his first realisation of the non-rational character of all inference from cause to effect and *vice versa* would make him doubtful of the possibility of any knowledge of truth. This is the impression we get from the *Enquiry*. But that book was written in the light of his matured scepticism, and would, of course, bring the fact prominently to our attention. The *Treatise* makes no mention of doubts, however, until we reach the subject of the external world. Here we find that the natural propensity to infer causes and effects is in conflict with this second inclination to believe the independent and continued existence of our perceptions. If we argue causally, we must regard the secondary qualities of matter as not actually present in the objects except when the human mind is present with them. They are dependent upon the mind. On the other hand, if we adhere to our tendency to attribute objective existence to whatsoever is constantly and coherently presented to us in our experience, we must suppose the color and touch qualities, at least, to be objective along with the primary qualities. This difficulty the mind cannot resolve. The prevailing solution in philosophy is open to more objections than the existing common-sense disregard of the problem itself. The primary qualities are ascribed to the real object, the secondary to the mind exclusively—but in terms of this very philosophy, what we perceive can never be anything less than the primary and secondary qualities together, so that we have no reason at all for distinguishing between the *reality* of the former and the unreality, or merely mental existence, of the other. As a matter of plain experience we find ourselves unable to define a material body without the qualities of color and touch which serve to distinguish

[6] Hume's consistency in this respect is emphasised by R. Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

it from its surroundings. Hence, if these secondary qualities are not real, there is nothing left which can be real. The outcome of Locke's position is thus "an extravagant scepticism." But Hume professes, at this point, to be only a "moderate" or Academic sceptic. He simply recognises the incompatibility of the two opinions, and yet adheres to his beliefs. The real continues to exist independently of ourselves who perceive it and, nevertheless, some aspects of it unmistakably vary in their appearance to the mind. The qualities of color and touch seem dependent upon our perception, and at the same time the whole order of objects thus qualified strikes us as distinct from our perception. This difficulty shows that the imaginative principles do not make a system, or possess a rationale. Hence the first note of scepticism in this youthful reconstruction of philosophy.

For a while Hume seems to have regarded this problem as the only redoubtable one in his thought. He made studies of the complex sentiments analogous to our complex ideas. Throughout the book he relied confidently upon his three principles of association or imaginative connection and unity. He went on into the origin of morals, pointing out how the complicated or "artificial" morals owed their existence to this same determinate imagination. He assumed everywhere the reality of "persons." Upon finishing his book he recalled the explanation which he had earlier given of "personal identity," and was dissatisfied with it. The perfect causality that holds for all the perceptions in our mind did not seem a sufficient basis for the belief,—that is, for what the belief means to us. This meaning he could not deny: the unity of the mind is something more real than any unity conceived in virtue of the relations among our perceptions. His method of explanation was thus a fault. Hume had to plead, as a sceptic, "that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding."

We should not forget, too, his preoccupation with the subject of religion throughout this early period, and the

long conflict in his mind between the arguments for the common opinion concerning divinity and the objections against it, prompted by his own intellectual restlessness. Though he saw clearly the defect of all metaphysical argument, from his questioning of the causal maxim, he also felt deeply the impressive statements on behalf of a religious faith by Berkeley in *Alciphron* and by Butler in his *Analogy of Religion*. The latter book included in it a treatment of personal identity. Hume wanted Butler's approval of his finished *Treatise* more than that of any one else then living. It would seem likely, in view of this admiration and respect, that Hume appreciated the meaning of the anthropomorphic theism defended by those authors. The old "demonstrations" might go, but some reason must exist for the belief of mankind in things divine. In certain places of the *Treatise* he spoke of the "moral arguments" as continuing to be valid. Such a degree of conviction kept him in suspense. He was no atheist, nor a complete sceptic. He was simply being tossed between a belief and the difficulties he discerned in all beliefs. It was a kind of scepticism, and later he represented it as a "philosophic scepticism,"—the attitude he adopted when face to face with insuperable difficulties from the side of reason, though he still could not help believing with the rest of mankind.

Hume was not given the opportunity to proceed with any further reconstructions of philosophy. The publication of the *Treatise* had signally failed to open the eyes of the world. Before novel views on these familiar and most important subjects could be offered the public, the necessity of a fresh consideration of the whole field of knowledge had surely to be brought home to them. Unless they appreciated his question about the maxim of cause and effect they would not see why imagination and its principles constituted a new medium of truth. Hence, after some practice in the art of writing for the public, through the *Essays*, he rewrote the three volumes of his original book. He made a careful selection of the topics in the first vol-

ume, to bring to the fore the scepticism arising out of the question about causation. He was obliged to abbreviate and suppress most of what he had formerly written about space, time, the external world, and the self, partly on this account, and partly, too, because his theory to explain the nature of causation did not, in the end, seem adequate to the explanation of those other realities. He added several new essays, however, to illustrate his problem, among them being two on the subject of religion. Thus the *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding* focussed attention upon the one illuminating point about causality and made it abundantly clear that some new philosophy must be devised. In a modest way it proferred Hume's own metaphysical solution, the "association of ideas" in the imagination.

Several years later Hume produced a revision of his study of *Morals*. It is very clearly an advance in constructive thinking. For one thing, it exhibits a certain appreciation of human reason. We do not read such emphatic derogations of it as in the *Treatise*, where he had written: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." It is true, "humanity" or the concern for other human beings is the foundation of morality, and this has an origin, if anywhere, in the imagination, though Hume was not disposed to press the point and averred only that the principle is genuinely ultimate in human life. But the extension of this sympathy comes about through the agency of reflection. The characteristic and important moral judgments are those concerning justice, honesty, loyalty, and good manners—merits appropriate to persons living in a civilisation which is itself the work of man's intelligence. The operation of this intellect is not wholesale or decisive: it takes place over long periods of time, slowly, and gradually. Reason in this modest rôle is not the grand demonstrative reason of the older theologians and the materialists, but it is still reason. The

Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals reveals that Hume is ready to admit reason into the scheme of things. The responsible and principled imagination of the *Treatise* is becoming identified with something rational.[7]

Whilst engaged in the writing of the *Enquiry* Hume had already begun his important studies in religion. Profiting by experience, he separated his problems, that concerning the origin of beliefs in human nature being dealt with in the *Natural History of Religion*, the other concerning the value of the beliefs, in the *Dialogues*. The first book was completed some time before the *Dialogues*. Its problem was easier. The origin of religion is not our intellectual understanding of the world, but our fearful and hopeful attitudes toward it. The earliest beliefs of men we must take, from historical record, to be polytheistic, and even ancient monotheism had no exalted origin. Moreover, we see in the history of human beliefs and practice a phenomenon that is to be expected when beliefs are not founded upon reason or experience—instability, the relapse from monotheism to idolatry and paganism, from eulogistic adoration of a Being Most High to familiar usage of beings very like ourselves in form and nature. And the same conflict of *motifs* is found in the philosophical study of religion. We are tossed from mysticism to anthropomorphism. Objections let us rest nowhere. Scepticism seems the only recourse. Yet here, as consistently throughout his work, Hume continues to believe, and think, and form some definite opinions on the matter. He prefers the naturalistic reading of Nature to its description as a machine originating with a divine artisan. He is more interested in the phenomena of life than in mechanics. Yet, just because any view is a *reading* of Nature, conveying *meaning* to those who make it, we must conceive of a Being as intelligible to us as we are to ourselves. Such a form of dogmatism is entirely compatible with that scepticism

[7] According to Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 386 *f.*, Hume's failure consisted in his inability to break down the *opposition* between imagination and reason.

which is everywhere made by him the first step to any solution of problems—in fact, it is but another aspect of the same turn of thought. Though "natural theology" or "deism" goes the way of metaphysics, "natural religion," in a quite new sense, remains. And it is "reasonable" to believe.

Hume's discussion of "moral subjects" is thus the most illuminating part of his philosophy. In dealing with them he seems to have made his initial discovery, and when he came back to them, in his maturity, he expressed most perfectly the true intent of his thinking.[8] He said this himself, in regard to the *Enquiry concerning Morals*. And his friends called the *Dialogues* the best thing he ever wrote, a judgment in which he apparently concurred when he took such extraordinary care to obtain the eventual publication of this book. Here we come face to face with his genuine empiricism, with his attempts to understand the true meaning of human experience, as well as to reveal the difficulties besetting all beliefs arising from it.

Something must be said, in this retrospect of Hume, about the views that seem to prevail concerning his philosophy. He is often considered to have denied the possibility of any truth beyond sense perception and to have adhered to a mental "atomism" which naturally belies our experience.[9] Thus he is supposed to have made causes or effects of events unreal, since they are, at the moment of inference, absent from our sense perception. There is no real external world, nor a self. Not even space or time is real. And these all seem inevitable consequences of what he announces as the "first principle" of his book: that all our simple ideas are *prima facie* derived from simple im-

[8] His increasing attention to matters of history, politics, morality, and religion is significant when we remember the topics which he dropped from consideration,—those, for example, of space, time, and mathematics. Hume seems to have recognised his limitations in the sphere of mathematical science. His powers were more effectual in the historical sciences. Cf. A. Riehl, *op. cit.*, p. 88; A. Thomsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 256 *f.*, 263.

[9] This criticism has appeared recently in S. Alexander, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 290.

pressions. Of course, whenever he studies an idea of necessity, or time, or space, or external existence, or self, he asks, first of all: what is the impression whence we have this idea? And every time he shows there is no simple impression. It is easy to conclude that he means: the "idea" itself is then spurious and invalid. Nothing seems left but isolated and disjointed sensations, whose presence to the mind is not even known *as* presence, since no past or future exists, nor place, nor connection with anything else.

Is it not amazing, if we take such a view of Hume, to find him everywhere interesting himself in the "complex," and not in the discrete, simple sensations? "Complex ideas," "complex impressions," compounded feelings or sentiments, the moral and religious sentiments, these are the objects of his persistent study. Belief is the concrete phenomenon of the understanding which he endeavors to comprehend. What is belief? An idea of something in relation with something else that is either present to the senses or remembered. From experience we infer a cause or effect in whose existence we believe. What is this experience? Hume is not so loose in his terminology here as we have become since his time. For us experience is a blanket term including everything, the true and the imaginary, the valid and the invalid. Hume adheres closely to the view of experience which Hobbes had when he wrote, that we can apply "the sequels of actions past, to the actions that are present; which with most certainty is done by him that has most experience; but not with certainty enough." Experience is the holding in mind of *orders* of *many* events in the past. It embodies unity and connection at the outset. And this Hume assumes, in the "constant conjunctions." In the significant portion of the *Treatise* dealing with *Probability* he wrestled with the problem of the source of such initial connection or order, and his answer was that it must be the same unwitting agency of imagination which *applies* this experience to the present situation. Every inference is a presumption, and the experience itself upon

which we rely is only presumptive in character, or, as Hobbes expressed it, we cannot go forward on it as a basis, "with certainty enough." It was not the fact, then, of unity and connection which Hume disputed, but the intelligible *ground* of it. And he affirms, most emphatically, that there are true causes, and real objects, and persons, and he even allows, with much less assurance, indeed, the reality of a God. These are all realities for us because they are the objects of belief derived from experience. Sensations are only "elements," and not the concrete existences with which we deal and live.

However, another view also persists, in corroboration of this fairly usual one about Hume's mental atomism. It is that the beliefs and complex phenomena so real to us are only the work of our imagination, and are, therefore, "subjective."[10] Here again we must recognise a peculiarity of our present usage. Hume never designates anything as subjective. The contrast of subject with object is later than his day. His favorite disjunction is between the "natural" and the "artificial," the latter being the work of the individual mind. His doctrine of "association" is conceived in opposition to Locke's theory of knowledge, wherein the mind itself is supposed to institute comparisons and "make" relations, and whatever these relations, in turn, will yield through further manipulation. It is Locke who really makes the private imagination the source of most of our important ideas;—Hume insists that their formation is not dependent upon the mind of an individual perceiver, but that it takes place uniformly and regularly among men, which means "naturally," or, according to a set of laws. It is an imagination of *principle* which Hume sets up as his hypothesis to account for the prevailing complex ideas and sentiments among mankind. It collaborates with other natural processes to bring about conceptions of Nature that will hold good for the vital intercourse of

[10] Cf. S. Alexander, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 41 *f.*

man with physical objects. Hume is not committing himself to a subjectivism, but to a naturalism.

Here the *Dialogues* seem to point the way to the perfection of his philosophy. The phenomena of life show that the forms or types of being are what they are because the beings themselves would not otherwise subsist. Now imagination is the typical activity of mind. It seems to operate regularly. It seems to have a rationale, though we cannot discern it by an inspection of its characteristic works; and, indeed, we even find its "principles" of association in direct conflict with each other, in certain of our beliefs. Yet for the "purposes of life" it seems sufficient, if not for abstract philosophy. May not the guarantee of this imagination consist in that service to life? Hume leads straight toward a biological warrant for the value of the essential processes of the human mind.[11] Nor is that his whole justification for them. He was open-minded enough to see that the method of reasoning in matters of common experience is not the only possible form of thought. Just as mathematical argument is out of place in ascertaining a matter of fact, so the scientific method may be inadequate to the interpretation of a reality which is, in any way, unique. The same *Dialogues* which hint at the biological derivation of our thought-processes are full of a sense of the possibilities contained in life. There may be new things and new principles discovered in the course of time, for time is real and brings with it novelties. We ought not, therefore, to circumscribe the limits of our knowledge by insisting upon the application of methods of thought valuable, so far, for knowledge, but not bearing in themselves any mark of intrinsic universality and necessity. The method is relative to the subject-matter. Our thinking must adapt itself to the meaning of what we are seeking to understand. It is this which Hume offers as the reason why he believes in a the-

[11] Cf. A. Riehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 *ff.*, especially p. 101; Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 307; Compayré, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

ism, despite insuperable objections from the side of scientific accuracy and caution.

In the end, it is a philosophy of naturalism that develops from Hume's scepticism. A constructive theory of knowledge and a "new medium of truth" are still hovering before his mind. There is a genuine science of nature, be it of inanimate things, or of living beings, or of man and human society. It is harder, of course, to assure ourselves of such a knowledge in religion, but it appears, at least, to be possible. This seems to be the final attitude of Hume. And the dramatic breaking of the author into his own play, in the concluding dialogue between Philo and Cleanthes, reveal its purport better than anything else. He is as much a "philosophical dogmatist" as a "philosophical sceptic."

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